PLAY OF THE OMNISCIENT

Life and Works of Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen
An Eminent 17th-18th Century Drukpa Master



National Library & Archives of Bhutan

Yonten Dargye, Per K. Sørensen
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Cover Illustration: Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen (1647–1732)
18th century, embroidered *thangka*

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Dedication

This modest work is respectfully dedicated

to our Fifth Druk Gyalpo

His Majesty Jigme Gesar Namgyal Wangchuck,

the torch-bearer of Bhutan's future destiny,

on the occasion of His Coronation.

The following pages also are a modest token to commemorate

the Centenary of our Monarchy,

under which the people of Bhutan have enjoyed

an unprecedented era

of peace, liberty, justice, and wellbeing.

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Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs
Royal Government of Bhutan
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བཀྲིས་ཆོས་རྫོང་།

བློན་པོ།
MINISTER

Foreword

Biographies of spiritual masters, generally speaking, depict the past events, the struggles and then the ultimate victory of spiritual luminaries who have travelled the path before us. They serve as role models for our spiritual work, and spur us on to make greater efforts than might generally result from our reading a moral dissertation or hearing a sermon. They show us that it is the actions of such saints – that is, the practical applications of their theoretical principles – that prove the truth of their teachings.

Such is the case with the biography of the Drukpa master Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen (1647–1732). It depicts the socio-religious milieu of our country in his time, his spiritual pursuit, and his ultimate triumph of attaining enlightenment.

Śākya Rinchen's biography of this great Drukpa master, composed largely in collaboration with the subject during his lifetime, is a seminal reference source for religious and social historians. However, being written in the language and style of the period, its readership is somewhat limited nowadays.

The National Library is to be praised for choosing Jamgön's life and work as a research topic and for bringing out such a new and reader-friendly translation of this important work. Jamgön lived through a turbulent era of our history as Bhutan began consolidation as a nation

state, and this rendition of the biography is presented in such a way as to convey both Jamgön's spiritual development and subsequent unstinting spiritual service to others, and the flavour of the times during which he lived his long life.

While reader-friendly in style, this is a serious work. The plethora of footnotes attest to the high level of scholarship of the authors, who seem to have left no stone unturned in seeking out and explaining details of Jamgön's interesting life. This new book makes a significant contribution to meeting the growing need for further and accessible reference materials on our history, culture and traditions.

Accordingly, I commend this work to all Bhutanese seeking to know more of their country's history, both as seekers of general knowledge and – more particularly – as students of Bhutanese history. It may be especially valuable to Bhutan's younger generation who have been raised in such a very different world from that of their elders. It is my fervent prayer that they may, through reading this book, come to a keener appreciation of the traditional culture which is their heritage.

Tashi Delek!

(Minjur Dorji)

Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs

Acknowledgements

Bhutan can take pride in the numerous religious masters who have appeared continuously throughout its almost 400 years of recorded history. Whether in the field of Buddhist scholasticism, or in that of esoteric ritualism and devotional liturgy, or in arts and crafts, Drukpa School masters have regularly emerged as outstanding masters, earning great fame and reputation not only within Bhutan but also beyond its borders. One such master is *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen (1647–1732), a most important religious figure in the history of 17^{th} and 18^{th} century Bhutan. His life and work was chosen as a research topic under the joint research programme between the National Library of Bhutan and The Royal Library of Denmark within the framework of "Institutional Strengthening of the National Library of Bhutan."

The present study remained a work in progress for much longer than its authors would have wished, due in large part to the wide scope of the subject matter and also to the authors' other professional commitments at their respective places of work. Now it is with great pleasure that they present the results of their years of research in this modest book, entitled *"Play of the Omniscient."*

We have incurred debts of gratitude from numerous spiritual luminaries and scholars not only in Bhutan, but also abroad – Derge (Kham) and Ladakh, along the trail we followed in order to trace vestiges of this great historical figure or offered other vital leads. Among them, foremost, we thank the following key persons related to the Project: Stig T. Rasmussen, Head, Department of Oriental and Judaica Collections, the Royal Library, Denmark and project counterpart on the Danish side; and Dasho Sangay Wangchug, the Venerable Mynak R. Trülku and Dorjee Tshering, former Directors of the National Library who were successive Project counterparts on the Bhutan side. We also thank John

Johnston of the Honolulu Academy of Arts for his help. We deeply appreciate their continuing support and enthusiasm for our work despite its sluggish progress, and we express our heartfelt gratitude for their patience.

We must also express warmest gratitude to our former Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs, Jigmi Y. Thinley who gave us unstinting support and encouragement during the process of our research. We initially planned to bring out this book during his tenure, but unfortunately were unable to do so. Similarly, we express gratitude to Dasho Penden Wangchuk, Secretary for Home and Cultural Affairs for his support and interest in this project.

Abroad, we owe debts of gratitude to Khenpo Kalden Tshering, abbot of Lhündrubteng Monastery in Derge (Kham) and to a Khenpo at Changra Monastery, Derge who provided guidance and help during our visit to Derge. Indispensible was the help received from His Eminence the 4th Takna Rinpoche, Ngawang Dönyod Dorje, head of the Southern Drukpa Kagyud in Ladakh, who shared his precious time with us at his wonderful sanctuary, Tiger's Nose Monastery (Takna Gönpa) in Ladakh. His Eminence most patiently answered our numerous queries and also generously permitted us to photograph several of his antiquities during our visit to Ladakh. Besides, numerous other anonymous monks unstintingly provided help for which we now express our gratitude.

At home, we owe special thanks to His Eminence *Trülku* Mipham Chökyi Nyinjed (the 6th Amorimu *chöje*) and to Khenpo Karma Tshering, the former principal of Seula Shedra for permitting us to make two visits to their ancestral monastic seat of Seula Chökhor Dorjeden, and for their unflagging interest in our research topic. Khenpo Karma Tshering in particular has been kind enough to extend a warm hospitality during our trip to Seula and render support by way of guiding us towards many important source materials hitherto unknown to us. We do not have words enough to thank him for his immeasurable help and good counsel.

We also benefited greatly from support and assistance given by Khenpo Khando, former principal of the Khothakha Shedra, by Lopön Zeko, Drungchen of Trongsa Rabdey and by many other monks in Punakha, Gasa, Wangdü, Trongsa, Bumthang and Paro, all of whom helped us unstintingly in searching out source materials as well as in the taking of pictures. We are immensely indebted to them all. We must also thank two internationally known Tibetologists with a continuing interest in Bhutanese culture, John Ardussi and Françoise Pommaret, for their interest in our chosen subject, and for their continued support and encouragement.

Many pictures have been incorporated in order to add life to the book. Most of the pictures, however, were taken "on the run" by the researchers themselves as they journeyed (within time limits imposed by other commitments) throughout parts of western and central Bhutan while searching out materials related to Jamgön's name and activities.

We must also sincerely thank Zoe N. Cheung for setting many things right in earlier drafts of this work. Most of all, many thanks to Felicity Shaw for her meticulous proof reading and copy editing of the final draft, and for compilation of a glossary to assist the readers. For remaining typos and mistakes, the authors hold full responsibility.

Until now nothing about the life and works of this great spiritual luminary has been published with full research. Our book is, therefore, a pioneer effort and we hope and believe that this small contribution on our part will serve in some small measure to lay the groundwork for a better understanding of the religious history of Bhutan.

Yonten Dargye, Per K. Sørensen
with Gyönpo Tshering
National Library & Archives of Bhutan

INTRODUCTION

1. Importance of the Subject

The biographies of saints and great masters are principally designed to serve as sources of inspiration and imitation. The very name of the genre for biographies in indigenous Tibetan and hence also Bhutanese literature is an indication of this: they are generally called *namthar* (or poetically *rtogs brjod*), literally "complete liberation" (*vimokṣa*), essentially providing the potential readers and devout followers with an inspirational guide to be followed for achieving ideal conduct of life. In content, they were life blueprints to be followed by the readers, with the central characters of such narratives being true spiritual role models. By nature, such narratives often were designed to instruct and uplift the reader morally or intellectually (principally morally) but they are quintessentially immensely imaginative and allusive.

Such biographies were most often compiled for ideological or pious reasons. They should never be regarded as critical discourses which might be subjected to any overly critical-analytic mode. They depict the worldly or supramundane struggles and ultimate victory of a selective group of persons whose individual lives were, for various reasons,

considered worthwhile or essential to narrate. But these were never stories or narratives for the sake of the story alone. Influenced by the sensibilities of the era and the political conditions prevailing at the time of compilation, the saintly portraits – the word hagiographies is often used – thus remain selective reconstructions or subjective filterings of past events. Mostly ideologically tainted, and limited in time, scope and concept, they allow the reader or researcher ample space to question and to inquire into the motives behind the compilation of such works.

Looking further into the narrative writings of the Bhutanese world, it can also be maintained that entire narrative settings and plots encountered in the kindred literature are reminiscent of similar narratives that commonly vex medievalists of European or East-Asian historiography when confronted with historical events of the past, where modes of perception and techniques of argumentation in retelling the past often differ from contemporary conventions and norms. Historical narratives and episodes conveyed and transmitted in written sources often remain contextually or culturally incomprehensible to an outsider.

Bhutanese historical and biographical narratives (and doubtless the written traditions of other cultures) contain numerous examples of the transformative power of rituals that interacted with politics within an historical context. These often imply the involvement of cultural symbols and signs – in other words the language of rituals – which were not insignificant for the establishing and consolidation of dominance. It is commonly argued that the true hallmark of power is the construction of reality, and on this account rituals here become all the more important. Throughout most of its first three hundred years, Bhutanese society remained unstable politically. With shifting political alliances, numerous symbols and human symbolic acts took on diverse or ambiguous meanings, on account of the changing nature of society or due to revalidated identities. In Bhutan (as in Tibet) political actions were highly ritualized and Manipulative, and their implementation remained essential for the functioning of the tiered, hierarchical order of society.

Biographical writing, like the historiographical genre, broadly defined, commonly draws a fundamental distinction between objective history, that is, as it was or as it happened ("the facts") and the subsequent subjective historical reconstruction of these events conducted by historians and biographers, or in other words, the facts as historical events *vis-à-vis* the reconstruction of those events of the remote or recent past. History as concept encompasses both modalities. The attempted construction of what constitutes historical meaning and sense and its interpretation, moreover, operate within the spheres of both "the facts" and later reconstruction of the events, with the latter's immensely broader operational domain. A proper historical narrative mode commonly attempts to deal with the former, and the non-historical imaginative narrative (including genres such as legend and myth) with the latter. However, the blurred distinction between the two often constituted the context within which most historical narration evolved or was transmitted.

The narrative mode regularly dominates much historiographical and biographical writing. It essentially focuses on a traditional retelling or portrayal of a story or successive stories, for instance such ones that delineate the genealogy and legitimacy of a person or entire families and clans, and thus often providing the rationale behind such legitimacy.

The exemplary mode also is documented in many historical and biographical materials, where events are mostly represented in an imaginative and allusive style in conformity with the celebrated Latin proverb *historia magistra vitae* "history is life's teacher" which conveys the idea that the study of the past serves as a lesson for the future. As the exemplary mode is a format for displaying ideal activities, the episodes and incidents narrated in this particular mode can be seen as parables, and functionally served as examples to be followed by the reader in conduct of his own life.

Bhutanese narrative literature is replete with such allusive discourses. Often, the narrative mode simply aims at teaching a lesson from history,

by providing the reader with a good example to follow and a bad one to be avoided. In essence, the narrative mode is for the most part didactic and allegorical.

The last major mode – the critical, or analytic narrative form – is by nature less anonymous and more reportative. Here the author's mind and personality often come to the fore and the story to be told is subjected to rigorous analysis. When events and incidents of the past are scrutinized, queried or challenged for validity, and arguments are tested against various interpretative patterns, or when reasoned explanations of events are offered, then the story itself transmutes into a certain kind of "counter-story" – an alternative reading of the events.

The above modes are ubiquitously present in a plethora of biographies – whether Buddhist-clerical or secular – and in some ways these narrative discourses resemble similar forms found in other major historiographical traditions – in medieval East-Asian (Chinese), Indian and Perso-Islamicate historiography as well as in medieval European historiography. They all seem to share a historical narrative discourse that was accentuated by the existence of an elaborate ideological mode of writing that both shaped as much as altered the way in which history was perceived.

To medieval historians, the recording and writing of history was in the final analysis a selective reconstruction or subjective filtering of events of the past, with an intentional, often ideologically tainted approach. Seldom discussed, but immensely significant in this respect is an inquiry into the motive, the bare intention governing or impelling the writing of authored historical narratives (leaving aside anonymous writings, which could, however, be subjected to a similar inquiry) – that is, the author's reason for writing the work, the open or hidden agenda.

Under these circumstances and constrained by the narrative discourse and modes described above, the following book sets out to narrate the eventful life and fortunes of *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen, an important

Drukpa master of Bhutan, who lived through the first unruly and unstable century of Bhutanese national independence. A man of noble birth, fine stature and dignified standing, he was a dynamic, able and, it appears, multi-talented scholar and ascetic, respected throughout Bhutan as well as further afield.

Jamgön lived his life through the era that marked Bhutan's faltering and not unrisky steps towards statehood, a turbulent period, the chronicle and narrative of which is vividly brought to life in Jamgön's biography, an elegantly written narrative by the accomplished biographer, Śākya Rinchen. Jamgön's own personal saga, encompassing changes of circumstance, adventures, and changes of fortune, can be read also as the saga of Bhutan.

Jamgön's legacy has proved enduring in numerous fields, such as religious arts and crafts, the art of chanting, religious dance, ritualism and religious practice, and also institutionally through his family-based incarnation line and his monastery, the Chökhor Dorjeden (Seula) in Punakha district. His reputation and enduring legacy were to go beyond the borders of Bhutan to the wider northern Buddhist cultural area. He visited Ladakh in the early years of the 18th century during the reign of King Nyima Namgyal, and this visit helped reinforce and deepen existing ties between the two realms.

On a personal scale, albeit himself untainted and unscarred by the lingering conflicts, nonetheless he paid a dear price as his father was assassinated and his mother and siblings banished under harrowing circumstances. The lifelong trials of his close relatives and the suffering endured by family members who had been marginalized and alienated from society were the cause of great agony in his life. Politically not cut out for the intrigues and plottings of worldly affairs, he basically remained powerless in the face of his family's tragic fortunes at the hands of reckless foes.

The portrait of Jamgön offered by his devout pupil Śākya Rinchen, despite being intimate and generally attentive to detail, does not reflect upon a series of issues of a political or personal nature. The depiction of Jamgön staying aloof from the political machinations of his days may have its origin in the simple circumstance that Jamgön was Śākya Rinchen's Root-Lama. Customarily, it was deemed inappropriate to provide telling details that might taint or challenge the desired saintly portrayal of the protagonist.

In the face of the humiliation and seemingly unjust treatment accorded his family by its foes, it remains a matter of conjecture as to what extent the stance taken by Jamgön (which was not dissimilar to that taken by the 4th Druk Desi, *Gyalse* Tenzin Rabgye during the same vexing period, arguably for similar reasons) was spurred by genuine religious sentiments urging or dictating him to abstain from involving himself in political or worldly affairs. While it readily corresponds to the stance expected to be taken by a true spiritual and pious master who advocated a neutral, non-violent and non-partisan stance, it is nevertheless inconceivable that he at no time organized any notable resistance or sought allies to counter, or at least to relieve, the suffering of his kin. His striking passivity or apparent indifference may have been rooted in fear, intimidation or timidity, but we can have no way of telling what sentiments haunted him.

2. Source Materials

It was customary in Tibet and Bhutan that one of the master's principal pupils would put together a written account of the life and feats of his master and teacher. Therefore it can be no surprise that Śākya Rinchen took up the noble commitment of writing a biography of Jamgön, his Root-Lama. Although Śākya Rinchen wished the task to be carried out, he felt that he was utterly unworthy and unprepared for it himself. He was uncertain about his ability to take up this challenging assignment, and he was wondering how to go about it.

Jamgön reportedly was initially reluctant to have his life story recorded in writing. He considered his life's activities unworthy of being committed to writing in the form of a biography, a stance routinely reported in such texts, arguably to underpin the protagonist's natural humility and modesty. However, he finally yielded to the repeated requests of his brother Ngawang Pekar (also known as Chung Rinpoche) and other disciples to have a written account prepared. Śākya Rinchen knew that Jamgön actually wanted his life story penned, although he did not receive from him any direct instruction to do so. After experiencing visions and dreams in which Jamgön indicated he would like his life story to be recorded, Śākya Rinchen took these to signify that he himself should undertake the mission. The visionary experiences he had undergone evidently boosted his confidence and morale, and served as the catalyst which enabled him to put pen to paper.

Ngawang Pekar already had a short written account of Jamgön's life, noted down as narrated by Jamgön himself during his long acquaintance with his brother. Śākya Rinchen, too, had noted down what was told to him by Jamgön while he was serving as his attendant, and also what he had heard from others about his master. Using this source material to underpin the biography, he began to write.

Śākya Rinchen (1710–1767), who was later to become the 9th Je Khenpo of Bhutan, composed his biography of Seula *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen in Punakha, during the years 1733 to 1735. This major work is rightly considered as one of the most informative and rich historical reference sources concerning 17th and 18th century Bhutan, offering us rare insights into both the personal career of the protagonist and into political developments unfolding in Bhutan during an eventful period in its history.

The only available version of Śākya Rinchen's biography is a beautiful and clear-cut Punakha print (*spungs thang spar ma*) carrying the title *sKu bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa Thams cad mkhyen pa'i rol mo*, covering fols. 1b1–234a2

[hereafter: *JGNT-I*]. It was Jamgön's nephew, *chöje* Ngawang Thinley (1712–70), head of Seula Monastery, who was the driving force behind its publication, and no doubt he also underwrote the cost of production. We know that manuscript writing was completed at Punakha Dzong, on the Twentieth Day of the Third Month, but the year is not mentioned. The printing work was coordinated and supervised by one Sangay Rinchen, the Dzongzin or Dzong overseer (*rdzong 'dzin pa*) of Trashigang (the present Lhungtsho Trashigang). The print is *Pungthang Parma*, i.e. xylographic print of Punakha, where the work most likely was first printed, possibly in the late 1730's or early 1740's.

Aside from this key source, another – even earlier – biography of *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen was composed in 1731 by Mipham Chogley Namgyal (Mi-pham Ngag gi dbang-phyug Phyogs-las rnam-rgyal; 1708–36), the 1st Speech Incarnation (*gSung sprul*) of *zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal, carrying the title *mKhas btsun bzang po'i bdag nyid mtshungs med chos kyi rje Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan kyi rnam par thar pa'i rgya mtsho Ngo mtshar gyi rba rlabs mngon par gyo ba*. MS 1b1–68a6 [= *JGNT-II*]; it was reprinted (n.d) under the same title (MS in *dbu med*; 1b1–60a8 = 1–119), by the National Library of Bhutan. This source clearly was based upon the notes taken by one Tsigay Shasana (rTsi-rgyas Śā-sa-na) and covers the life of Jamgön until 1727; prompted by Jamgön's disciple *chöje* Thinley Gyalpo, the author composed this biography one year before Jamgön passed away in 1732. The text is quite ornate in style but much shorter and for its lack of historical information of limited biographical value, since it touches only briefly on each of the different phases of Jamgön's life.

The colophon of *JGNT-II* informs us that the biography of *jetsün* [*jamgön*] Ngawang Gyaltshen, entitled "Play of the Omniscient" or *Thams cad mkhyen pa'i rol mo*, was written by Śākya Rinchen upon the request and direct sponsorship of Ngawang Thinley, Jamgön's nephew. It was done, as it is said, out of his fervent faith and devotion to his most respected Root-Lama. The biographer also contends, in conformity with the modest tone accompanying such hagiographic writings, that the

biography, i.e. the narration of the life of such a highly accomplished adept and saint is as vast as space itself, and therefore difficult (i.e. impossible) to describe, wherefore only a drop from the ocean of his innumerable accomplishments could be written down. It was completed on the Sixteenth Day of the Third Month (*nag pa zla ba'i shes rab kyi cha'i rdzogs pa dang po'i tshes la*) at Pungthang Dewa Chenpoi Phodrang (sPungs-thang bDe-ba-chen-po'i Pho-brang [i.e. Punakha]).

The content of this English rendition of the biography does not follow the chapter divisions (*sarga*) of the original text, but has been rearranged at the authors' discretion to better demarcate and highlight the main events and postings of our protagonist's life.

In presenting our rendition of this exalted biography, we pray that the teachings of the Buddha may spread by way of hermeneutics and realization (*bshad sgrub*) and last long for the benefit of sentient beings!

Chapter I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Setting the Scene

After the revival and nascent growth of religious schools in Tibet in the 11th and 12th centuries Bhutan, then known as *Lhomon* (the pre-Bhutan designation of the region prior to its mid-17th century formation as a state), gradually became a suitable locale for the religious activities of various sages and ascetics. From the end of the 12th century to the beginning of the 17th century, continuous visits were made by these Tibetan itinerants, predominantly to the western part of the country. Through their activities on repeated visits, they brought to bear profound spiritual and cultural influence on Bhutan.

Regardless of which school they belonged to, they were basically attracted to Bhutan either by the great pilgrimage sites of Padmasambhava or by the search for local patronage and recognition, while some intruded into the sacred valleys of Bhutan to escape from the turmoil of Tibetan politics, caused by incessant rivalries between different schools. Once they arrived in Bhutan, they moved around seeking the support of affluent and generous local patrons, which enabled them to establish

hermitages as well as suitable places for founding their monastic seats.

Through the centuries, a number of influential local gentry families and hereditary religious lineages (*chöje, zhengo*) holding both religious and secular power became established in the region, in particular the diverse family lines that boasted descent from Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo (1184?–*c*.1251) – another early Drukpa pioneer – who held sway over large stretches of the remote and isolated western valleys, such as Paro, Thimphu, Punakha and Wangdü. They kept up close ecclesiastical bonds as a spiritual lifeline, but also maintained marital ties with the ruling heads of the Drukpa mother-seat of Ralung in Tibet. The pre-1600 abbatial throne succession in Ralung had followed – as dictated by tradition – a familiar uncle-nephew arrangement, and the influence of many families at the court of the Drukpa hierarchs must have been considerable.

More than one Ralung throne-holder in fact had a mother descended from those local families. The concomitant support, extensive monastic patronage and marital alliances of these families altogether proved to be far from insignificant for the enduring prosperity and coherence of the Drukpa School itself. The success of an ascetic or religious master in the mundane world largely hinged upon to what extent he was able to garner necessary support from his local patrons, as well as the degree to which he proved himself capable of any involvement in worldly activities. A dynamic man could acquire and wield not just immense religious authority, but also gain a fair amount of local temporal power, thereby enhancing the political importance of his particular religious school. In due course of time, some religious schools slowly gained primacy over laymen in dealing with secular matters.[1]

Among various Buddhist emissaries, ranging from representatives of the Nyingmapa to those of the Sakyapa creed, adherents of the Drukpa School are the first documented propagators of Buddhism to have sought shelter in the remote and largely uncharted territories of western

1 Pommaret 1997: 186. See also Aris 1979: 172–81

Bhutan. Judging from the number of followers and the importance of their activities,[2] between the 12th century and the early years of the 17th century the Drukpa School gradually emerged as a powerful and influential presence, especially in the western part of Bhutan.

The Drukpa School's success in establishing itself so firmly can be ascribed principally to the loyal patronage and support offered to it by the descendants of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo. Ties between the descendants of Phajo in pre-17th century Bhutan and the Drukpa mother-seat of Ralung in the eastern Tsang province of Tibet were maintained through religious and matrimonial links with the Drukpa rulers of Ralung. The traditional uncle-nephew (*khu dbon*) arrangement for ascent to the religious throne (as in most other schools in Tibet) thus ensured that in Ralung a number of the successive throne-holders and heirs were born of women who had been raised in the valleys of the Southern Lands (i.e. Bhutan).[3]

These contributory factors aided greatly in the Drukpa School's rapid rise to prominence in western Bhutan. By the end of the 16th century, at least five Drukpa lineages were securely established there: the descendants of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo reigned in Paro, Thimphu, Punakha and Wangdü districts; the Tshamdrak *chöje* family in Chukha; the Obtsho in Gasa; the Zarchen in Paro; and Drukpa Kunley's lineage in Thimphu.[4]

The support of these family lineages had far-reaching consequences for the creation of a unified country. It was surely due to their unswerving and loyal support that *Zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651), the legitimate but hapless prince-abbot of Ralung, was able to build his state after arriving in Bhutan in 1616.

2 Aris 1979: 165-81; Dargye and Sørensen 2001; Dargye 2001: 56–113.

3 During the late 15th century when the ruling principal seat of the 'Brug-pa school shifted to succession by reincarnation, the tradition of marital ties between the 'Brug-pa hierarchs in Rva-lung and Bhutanese families especially those boasting descent from Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom zhig-po ceased.

4 *LCB–II* 97ff. See also Pommaret 1997: 187

One member of the eminent local Drukpa aristocracy was the Obtsho[5] *chöje* of Gasa, whose hereditary family had maintained close matrimonial and religious ties with the ruling Gya family of Ralung since the 13th century. Their monastery was one of the oldest Drukpa foundations in Bhutan. It is duly recorded that the family had been the trusted patron of the successive prince-abbots of Ralung. One of the key figures of this period from Obtsho was Tenzin Drukgye (1591–1656),[6] a contemporary of the Zhabdrung. Before the Zhabdrung's flight to Bhutan, Tenzin Drukgye served both as 'treasurer' (*chagdzö, phyag mdzod*) and as precentor or chanting master (*umze, dbu mdzad*) – responsible for civil as much as for ecclesiastical matters (an administrative model to be continued later in Bhutan) – at Ralung monastery, a proof of the great trust which the Zhabdrung had placed in him and his family.

It was when in Tibet proper his relations with the Tsang Desi Phüntshog Namgyal (1597–1621) had taken a turn for the worse, following a number of set-backs in the wake of heated conflict regarding the then still unresolved dispute over reincarnation of the Drukpa founder Tsangpa Gyare, that the Zhabdrung began to think about fleeing either to Mongolia or to the Southern Land of the Four Approaches, as Bhutan was then commonly known. At that point in time, a patron of the Zhabdrung from Gasa named Sithar arrived to pay a visit to him

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5 'Obs-mtsho may mean "the Fire-pit Lake" (among others known from the standard description of Hell in Buddhist literature) or it arguably may be corrupt? for 'O-ma'i mtsho or "Milk Lake." It had been a seat of an aristrocratic family descended from *grub thob* gTer-khung-pa until the early 17th century. It is located on the hillside above the main track, half an hour's walk from the track before reaching mGar-sa rDzong, and today only ruins can be seen there. See Fig. 1 Ardussi argues that the name 'Ob-mtsho is of unknown origin. The date for the foundation of this seat is suggested to be shortly after the death of gTsang-pa rgya-ras, i.e. in about 1212–14. Cf. Ardussi 2000: 2f.

6 bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyal, the 1st sDe-srid of Bhutan, was born in 1591 into the 'Obs-mtsho family. At the age of 11, he went to Rva-lung where he attended on Zhabs-drung's father bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma. He later became a monk and received the entire teaching corpus of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa system. At the age of 20, he rose to the double rank of *phyag mdzod* or Treasurer and *dbu mdzad* (Precentor, "Master of Chant") at Ban-tshang monastery. In 1651, upon the demise (or retreat) of Zhabs-drung, the latter entrusted the state responsibilities to him, and he ruled for about five years hereafter as 1st sDe-srid in Bhutan. See *Druk Dron* 193–201; *TNRT* 58b3–59b3.

and, knowing that the Zhabdrung was not on good terms with the Tsang Desi, he personally extended an invitation to him stating:

> Lama Rinpoche, ... in our Southern Land there are three big valleys, each of which is governed by worthless lords and lamas, with no laws for the people, [a situation resembling] a pot without handle. Since we have enough religious estate there, please come![7]

The Zhabdrung also received a letter of invitation from an Obtsho Lama requesting him to come to the South. Alhough the historical records do not identify the lama, it seems quite likely that Tenzin Drukgye was behind the bestowal of this invitation, while at the same time in Ralung he must have influenced the Zhabdrung in his decision to seek refuge in Bhutan, knowing that he would be warmly welcomed there by Tenzin Drukgye's own family members. The Zhabdrung accepted the offer and, escorted by the Obtsho lama fled towards the South [Bhutan]. On arrival, he was ceremonially welcomed by the family members of the Obtsho *chöje* as well as by others.[8]

On a larger scale, Zhabdrung's flight to Bhutan proved to be a turning point, a landmark event and the birth-hour of the new nation-state to be known as '*Drukyul*' or Bhutan. Following his gradual attempts to unify the isolated and disparate autonomous districts, Zhabdrung's efforts were strongly opposed by both external enemies and internal opposition. Externally, he was attacked by Tibetans on many occasions; internally, he was resisted by leaders of other religious schools in the area.

Among the stout supporters who backed the unification efforts launched by the Zhabdrung, we find a number of long-established, high-ranking families and local ruling houses. Among these was the Obtsho *chöje*, whose steadfast support and influence contributed greatly towards unifying and consolidating of Bhutan as nation in the early decades of 17th century. A number of Obtsho family members were to occupy powerful

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7 *DTNT* 2004: 13–14: *bla ma rin po che ...nged kyi lho mas na lung pa gsum yod de / 'byung khungs med pa'i dpon re / lung khungs med pa'i bla ma re byas nas / mi la khrims med rdza la lung med pa zhig yod pas der 'byon na chos gzhi lang tsam yod pas der phebs par zhu.*

8 Ref. Sangs-sgyas rdo-rje 1999: 74–76, 87–93.

positions in the service of the new ecclesiastical government. Notable examples, besides the first Desi *umze* Tenzin Drukgye, include the first Desi's brother Druk Namgyal, who coordinated a military offensive against Dagana in the south of Bhutan, that led to its incorporation into the emerging state;[9] Pelden Drukgyal who served as the first *chagdzö* of the newly constructed Punakha Dzong; the 1st Desi's nephew Ngawang Rabten, who became an officer and minister of state under the 3rd Desi Mingyur Tenpa (1613–1681);[10] and not least, Ngawang Rabten's son, *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen whose life shall be told in some detail in this book. Thus it is known that the Obtsho *chöje* first rose to political prominence in the 17th century, and remained influential through the successors of its branch Amorimu up to the 19th century.

2. The Obtsho Family

The family origin of the Obtsho lineage is shrouded in mystery and cloaked in legend. The family chronicle situates their origin in the remote past and vests it with a celebrated background, quite similar, incidentally, to other ethnogenetic beginnings of noble houses and important families in this part of the world.[11] In the present case, the origin myth would seem to either copy, or at least draw heavily from, the similar origin myth of the famous Gya (rGya) clan with which the Obtsho throughout many centuries was fated to uphold and entertain close bonds. It is recorded that the Obtsho progenitor can be traced to a remote mythic hero associated with the 7th century arrival in Tibet (i.e. *ca.* 641) of Chinese princess Wencheng, daughter of the T'ang Emperor of China to marry Songtsen Gampo (581/93–649), the founding figure of the Tibet's Yarlung Dynasty and one of the three great Dharma Kings of Tibet. History records that she received from her emperor-father the famous statue of the Buddha [i.e. Jowo Śākyamuni] as a dowry gift.[12] It is said that this statue of the Buddha was transported to Tibet under

9 See *TRNT* 58b–59a.
10 *JGNT–II* 46b5–47b4. See Ardussi 2000: 10–11.
11 See e.g. App. II, Chap. 1.2 in *RCP* Sørensen and Hazod.
12 See *TBH* Sørensen: 215f.; *Myang chos 'byung* 25.



Fig. 1 Ruins of Obtsho Dzong, the ancestral seat of Jamgön. Photo: Daza

escort and the Obtsho progenitor supposedly was one of the members of escort party responsible for the statue's transportation. The legend as told does indeed resemble the origin myth of the Gya clan which allegedly stemmed from two Chinese (*rgya*) (*sic*) champions known as Lhaga and Luga (lHa-dga' and Klu-dga') similarly in charge of the safe transportation and arrival of a Jowo Śākyamuni image to the Snow Land. We here may assume a deliberate intermingling of two separate origin myths or, as suggested above, an ill-veiled case of plagiarism, designed to enhance the family story with the glory and prestige of another famous family.



Fig. 2 *Drubthob* Terkhungpa from a wall painting. Photo: Daza

The narrative of the Obtsho family claims (here at variance with the Gya narrative) that their family progenitor was a lone Jowo caretaker, popularly called Dema Dema [lDe ma lDe ma = lDem ma lDem ma?] – a name explained to derive from the expression that he would never separate himself from "the side, i.e. presence of the Jowo statue (*jo bo'i*

ldem)," [i.e. from guarding] – is itself surely an attempt at the popular etymology so persistently cherished among Tibetan and Bhutanese historians.[13] It was from Dema Dema that later on, following successive descendants of whom we know next to nothing – and all carrying the ethnic group clan name Dema/Denma – that Denma Tsemang[14] emerged,

13 The 'Ob-mtsho house's ancestral sources claim that they stemmed from a single caretaker/or guard of the Jowo Statue who, as it is claimed, originally descended from a divine lineage (*lha rigs*; usually indicating royal blood or descent; cf. Gyalbo, Hazod and Sørensen 2000: 25).

Setting their origin within a similar mythical narrative frame – the rGya progenitor also being caretakers of the celebrated Jowo statue – the highly influential rGya lineage of Tibet is more easily traceable in the earliest period: it was an imperial-time clan which in the 9th–11th century is recorded to have held sway over large stretches of land and estates (part of a royally bestowed appanage grant (*dbang ris*) no doubt due to their service to the Tibetan kings in Myang-stod of the gTsang province towards lHo-mon; cf. R. Vitali (2004: 7ff). Possession of vast land holdings or estate lands including present-day Bhutan was in this period also held by another clan, the influential 'Gos clan, accounting e.g. for the toponymic name 'Gos-yul [stod gsum] due north of the present Bhutan border towards the gTsang province.

Without going into a lengthy discussion, another far more viable origin of the rGya ("the clan from "China"), however, may indicate that it represented the imperial-time and indigenous rHya clan of ancient Tibet. The ethnogenesis of the rGya clan is mechanically repeated in most biographies of masters boasting descent from this noble line; see e.g. *YSGNT* 24b3f.

14 lDan-ma [or lDe-ma/lDem-ma] bTsan-mang is chronicled to have accompanied Guru Rin-po-che not least during his second visit to Bhutan. He is registered as one of Guru Rinpoche's twenty-five chief disciples whose spiritual attainment is said to have equalled that of Guru himself. As a master calligrapher, he is believed to have mastered three hundred scripts (said to be current in Central Asia and beyond). To him is attributed the first composition of a distinctive Bhutanese cursive writing today known as *mgyogs yig* (Jogyig). It allegedly carries close resemblance to the script employed in ancient Tibetan documents traced in Dunhuang. See the samples reproduced in van Driem 1998: 51; Olschak 1979:198–215.

lDan-ma bTsan-mang reportedly was the redactor of the *Thang yig chen mo*, one of the sources of the second part of the *bka' thang sde lnga* compendium. A famous Tibetan chronicle, *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* lists him as one of three senior translators (*lo tsā ba rgan gsum*) at bSam-yas under the tutelage of Padmasambhava. He was also the scribe and scholar to whom Padmasambhava dictated the famous legend of king Sindha-ra-dza (Sindhurāja), later a rediscovery by one of lDan-ma bTsan-mang's incarnations (translations in Aris 1979: 43–48, and Olschak 1979: 63–88; Ms is reproduced 181-193). lDan-ma, arguably the best spelling form for the ethno/toponymic? name of the clan (*rus*), indeed seems to have stemmed from or be related to Khams district (i.e. the lDan-ma-brag district). For the lDan-ma clan; see



Fig. 3 Gasa Trashi Thongmön Dzong. Photo: Daza

recorded as a close disciple of the 8th century saint Padmasambhava. Unexplained remains the circumstance that this famous 8th century calligrapher-saint, Denma Tsemang allegedly travelled down from Kham and that his line (or an offshoot) later re-emerged in Myangtö (Nyang/Myang-stod) of eastern Tsang province not far from present-day Bhutan. However, it was more than several hundred years later that members of this Dema/Denma clan group supposedly migrated to Tsang, where one of Denma Tsemang's direct descendants is said to have founded a seat at a place called Tathang or 'Horse Plain' in Myangtö. It was into this family that two brothers, *lopön* Pelden Sherab and Pelden Gyalpo were born.

The elder brother Pelden Sherab appears to have been very learned in both Sūtra and Tantra, and regarded as particularly accomplished in the many religious cycles pertaining to the Kargyud, Sakya and Nyingma traditions. He was recognised as having reached the highest level of spiritual accomplishment and for this reason was universally known as *geshe* Tathangpa.[15] It was from him that Pelden Drukpa Rinpoche

Stein 1961: 75–77. Traditionally, the lDan-ma clan is listed as one of the six great lineages/clans of Eastern Tibet (*bShad mdzod* 190).

15 gTsang-pa rgya-ras, when he was 12 years old, received preliminary monastic vows from *dge bshes* rTa-thang-pa who conferred upon him the name of Shes-rab



Fig. 4 Meditation cave of *drubthob* Terkhungpa located within the Gasa Dzong complex. Photo: Daza

Tsangpa Gyare (1161–1211), the founder of the Drukpa Kagyudpa Order, received his hair-cutting ceremony and his lay [*upasaka*] precepts, following which he was the recipient of a number of esoteric teachings, initiation and empowerment.

In order to continue the family line, *geshe* Tathangpa resolved to marry a holy woman from the Khyung clan.[16] On one occasion, while in

bDud-rtsi 'khor-lo. Cf. *'Gro ba'i mgon po gTsang pa rgya ras pa'i rnam par thar pa Ngo mtshar dad pa'i rlabs 'phreng* 5b2–3.

16 This would indicate that Byams-mgon was in fact ultimately descended both from the lDan-ma and the widely-ramified Khyung[-po] clan, a dominant clan people of Myang (M/Nyang-ro/stod/smad) district of gTsang province in Tibet; cf. *Myang chos 'byung*, *passim*. According to a clan distribution scheme (*bShad mdzod* 190f), among the six great clans of Western Tibet are listed the 'Bre clan/lineages but also the Khyung[-po], whereto we can mention the lCe and rGya clan (cf. e.g. also Jackson 1984: 110–114) who were the all-dominant occupants of the Myang-stod district. The population and native clan rule of the large Myang area display a complex ethnic pattern. The area of conversion of the 'Bre clan and the *dharmacakra*-activity of 11[th] century 'Bre chen-po was the district of Bye-mda' of Upper Myang. It was also at the 11–12[th] century seat of Myang-stod 'Chad-mang, est. by 'Be [= 'Bre?] g.Yo-rong-btsun (*mkhan bu* of Grva-pa mNgon-shes) and at the famous gNas-rnying seat that 'Bre chen-po taught extensively and where he

retreat at the Gomo Terkhung Cave,[17] he experienced a vision in which he encountered lopön Balachandra of eastern India. During his retreat, his wife gave birth to a son to be called Norbu Pelden, born amidst a number of auspicious signs on the Fifteenth Day of the Fourth Month. Already from the age of three or four, tradition holds that Norbu Pelden regularly practised meditation, and that he from that time on displayed many wondrous acts to the surprise of everyone. Norbu Pelden's father passed away when he was nine, and it then dawned upon him that all compounded things were subject to impermanence. Soon thereafter, he caught leprosy, but later he was cured. When he had grown up, his mother wanted him to marry and to settle down, but unwilling, the son pledged that he had no wish for wealth and for a secular life; his only wish was to take up a religious life. With these words, he placed the rosary of his late father on his head.

When Norbu Pelden turned fifteen, he decided to flee to take up religious life and went into the presence of Tsangpa Gyare. Being accepted by the latter, he served him as an attendant, carrying out his duties most faithfully. Tsangpa Gyare considered him a spiritual son and a worthy lineage-holder, whereupon he bestowed upon him complete teachings and instructions related to view, meditation and conduct (*lta sgom spyod gsum*). He was named Rinchen Drakpa Pelden.[18] Following his Lama's instruction, any doubt as to his spiritual development vanished.

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established a *bshad grva*. He had many students such as *sngags 'chang* Rin-chen 'byung-gnas, Khyung Rin-chen-grags and the influential La-stod-pa (or gNas-rnying-pa) dKon-mchog mkhar-ba – the latter was his most prominent student who eventually took over the seat of gNas-rnying. Cf. for details *Myang chos 'byung* 36f., 64, 75–83 *et passim*.

17 sGo-mo gTer-khungs. The place (still not identified) was noted for its thermal springs and sulfurous geysers, and was also the home of a demon named *sgo bdud chen po*, who by *grub thob* gTer-khungs-pa was transformed into a protective deity.

18 The life of gTer-khungs-pa, the "One from the Treasure Cave" with the name Rin-chen grags-pa dpal-ldan is not well documented. Images and statues of gTer-khung-pa are presently found at rNam-rgyal-rtse mGon-khang, the three temple buildings at Se'u-la proper (see Fig. 83) and in the private chapel at A-mo-ri-mu (see Fig. 6).

The Lama prophesied:

> Although you have realized the innate nature of all phenomena, still in order to further fathom its meaning, go to a place with a boiling lake full of poison located towards the north, the abode of a malicious demon, surrounded by one hundred springs, located in the heart [of Tibet], the country that resembles a supine demoness. Meditate there until you gain appropriate signs of yogic accomplishments, only then you will realize your great objectives![19]

In accordance with this prophecy, Rinchen Drakpa Pelden went there and meditated at the cave. The dramatic scenario of the encounter and suppression is described accordingly:

> After seven days of meditation, the lake suddenly began to boil, and a terrific storm swept over the surrounding countryside. Various dreadful apparitions became visible before the eyes of the Rinchen Drakpa Pelden who, however, did not show the slightest sign of fear. Then an utmost terrifying demon appeared rising out of the lake. Fire issued from his eyes, and fat dripped from his mouth. His right hand brandished a bow and an arrow, and the left hand whirled a serpent-snare. The demon tried to frighten him, but having failed he suggested to the mendicant to have a competition in order to see who could assume the bigger size. The winner would then swallow the loser. The mendicant agreed to this proposal and the competition started. First both of them tried to reach the biggest size, and in this competition the demon had the upper hand; but then, while trying to reduce them to the smallest size, Rinchen Drakpa Pelden outdid his opponent. The contest ended in a draw, and the two competitors agreed that they should swallow each other.
>
> First Rinchen Drakpa Pelden swallowed the demon. Once inside his body, the demon tried to kill him by tearing at his intestines, but Rinchen Drakpa Pelden quickly increased the heat of his body by means of *tummo* (psychic heat yoga) and burnt the demon so severely that the latter began to scream in pain, begging to be let out. But as soon as he was out, he demanded his right to swallow him, to which the mendicant had to cede. As soon as he reached the monster's stomach, Rinchen Drakpa Pelden once more began to practise *tummo*, and he managed to increase the heat of his body in such a measure that the demon began to roll with pain. He now realized that Rinchen Drakpa Pelden was a great adept. Assuming

19 *JGNT–II*: 15a2–4.



Fig. 5 Tsangpa Gyare (1161–1211). the founder of the Drukpa Kagyud Order from a wall painting. Photo: Yonten Dargye

human shape, he apologized for his faults. Rinchen Drakpa Pelden then bound him by oath and named him Drakpo Tsal (Drag-po-rtsal), who promised that he would become a protector of the Buddhist teachings. From then on the demon Godü Chenpo (sGo-bdud chen-po) followed his conqueror Rinchen Drakpa Pelden as an obedient servant wherever he went.[20]

It was spiritual accomplishments like these that earned Rinchen Drakpa Pelden the name Terkhungpa (Öne from the Treasure Cave") [hereinafter Terkhungpa].

20 Cf. R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1998: 241–42). Dam-can sGo-bdud chen-po after being subjugated seemed to have been named "Dam-can sgo-mo" which became protective or guardian deity of Byams-mgon and his successive families, with its main seat at rNam-rgyal-rtse (Se'u-la).

At a later point, being informed that his mother was seriously sick, Terkhungpa went into her presence. His mother passed away shortly after. Again, he went back to his Lama in Ralung and in front of an assemblage of 2,800 monks, Tsangpa Gyare is recorded to have said that the auspicious portents were good for the spreading of the Dharma, since Terkhungpa was the son of his own teacher [i.e. *geshe* Tathangpa]. His Lama is recorded to have foretold:

> My son, your future field for converting disciples is located in the southern direction of the sun [i.e. the area of present-day Bhutan]. Hence you must go there, and if you happen to succeed in gathering a pious assemblage of disciples, you must take care of them and guide them, for great benefit will ensue to sentient beings.[21]

Complying, he eventually set out on this missionary errand that ultimately would bring him to the South, on his journey founding the monastic seat of Pelding.[22] He thereupon returned briefly to Ralung for the funeral ceremony of his Root-Lama Tsangpa Gyare, and made a large amount of offerings. He again left Ralung and continued his journey, passing through nomadic areas south of Myangtö, such as Drok Tshayul ('Brog Tsha-yul), until finally he arrived at Dechen Chöding.[23]

Terkhungpa was subsequently invited by the people of Laya[24] and Gön[25] in what is now northern Bhutan where his service to living beings increased extensively, as it is customarily phrased. At the request of the patrons of Gön, he established the monastic seat of Obtsho, probably

21 *JGNT–II*: 16b1–2: *bu khyod kyi gdul bya'i zhing nyi ma lho phyogs su yod pas der song la dad ldan gyi tshogs pa re byung na'ang skyongs shig khyod kyi 'gro ba la phan thogs par yod do zhes lung bstan.*

22 dPal-ldìng, as suggested by Ardussi (2000: 22), may have been located in the Khu-le valley of Myang-stod, the birth-place of gTsang-pa rgya-ras. This became the main seat of gTer-khung-pa and his descendants in Tibet.

23 The "Salt Land of the Nomads" is still unidentified. bDe-chen Chos-sding seems to have been located close to the border of Bhutan.

24 La-yag[s] is the nomadic area due north of mGar-sa district.

25 dGon-yul comprises the areas of dGon Kha-stod and dGon Kha-smad. It is located in the mountains northwest of sPu-ṇa-kha in the western Bhutan, in present-day mGar-sa district.

around 1212–1214.[26] He then returned to Tibet [perhaps to his local seat at Pelding in Tsang], where his uncle Pelden Gyalpo still resided.

Pelden Gyalpo had two sons named Lama Ön and Nyimai Wangpo. The latter had a son named Pelden Dorje. Terkhungpa installed Pelden Dorje, his grandson, as head of the local seat of Pelding.[27] The elder

26 Oral sources recount a tale which indicates that 'Obs-mtsho once was a flourishing seat of the descendants of *grub thob* gTer-khung-pa. It happened once that a deadly epidemic struck the village, causing a high death-toll. The people took recourse to divination which suggested the performance of a ritual to ward off this misfortune. During the performance, the ceremonial *gtor ma* were seen carried off by ravens flying in the direction where *grub thob* gTer-khung-pa had once meditated – where the present mGar-sa rDzong stands. Following this incident, some of the 'Obs-mtsho family members decided to move there.

Two households known by dGon Ma-ṇi and dGon Phyogs-las [~ Phya-ba-gling];* both of which are located below the mGar-sa rDzong, today said to be family households which migrated at that time. It is also claimed that they were not only ones abandoning 'Obs-mtsho; in successive periods of time, two families were said to have migrated to dGon sNang-srid dGon-pa and dGon A-mo-ri-mu (see foot note 42 below), too. Alhough the exact timing of their migration remains unknown, the reasons for their migration are stated to have been, firstly to escape from the epidemic that ravaged the village of 'Obs-mtsho and secondly to seek more fertile land where rice could be cultivated. To this day it is said that these families trek to the ruins of 'Obs-mtsho where certain rites are performed annually. See Ardussi 2000: 2f.

* Ref. *DTNT* 2004:17–18. The wealthy man lHa-dbang tshe-ring from Phya-ba-gling hosted Zhabs-drung's stay in mGar-sa. On the request of the former, the Zhabs-drung conducted an empowerment ceremony of longevity, wearing the '*Pan chen dbu zhva*', the Hat of a Pandita, for the first time after his arrival in Bhutan. A large number of devotees gathered there to receive the empowerment from him, and the devotees including lHa-dbang tshe-ring offered him numerous offerings. Before leaving, he entrusted all the offerings to the care of lHa-dbang tshe-ring, instructing him that he would need them later when he would construct a monastery (i.e. Punakha rDzong) and at that time he should bring it to him. Accordingly, all the offerings were brought to sPu-ṇa-kha and offered to Zhabs-drung. In 1641, Zhabs-drung issued to lHa-dbang tshe-ring's family line, Tshang-tshang and 'Brug bKra-shis, an edict giving the family due recognition and honour wherever they travel with entitlements of porter, pony, firewood, feed for horses, together with one pair of his used boots and a miniature image carved in stone. The precious edict and the gifts are still being preserved at the house of lHa-dbang tshe-ring's descendant Padma rdo-rje in mGar-sa. See Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 92–93.

27 Ardussi (2000: 4–5) suggests that the two religious seats of dPal-sdings in Myang-stod district (Tibet) and 'Obs-mtsho in dGon-yul (Bhutan) initially seem to have been jointly administered under the control of gTer-khung-pa's descendants; but

son of Pelden Gyalpo named Lama Ön (i.e. dBon; "Nephew") was in Ralung, and with the permission of Tsangpa Gyare's successor in Ralung, Darma Senge (1177/8–1237), Lama Ön eventually was invited to Obtsho and upon his arrival, accompanied by many attendants, he was installed as the new head of the Obtsho monastic seat.[28] From this description, it is evident how close the network was spun between the mother-seat and its dependencies (*ma lag*) in those pioneering days of the Drukpa School.

Terkhungpa provided many teachings to his nephew at Obtsho. While leaving for Tibet, he entrusted the protective deity Genyen Chenpo[29] to become the protective deity of the seat. Before leaving for the north, Terkhungpa instructed his nephew to expand the seat as much as possible and to take good care of it. He also advised his local Obtsho patrons to be noble in attitude and remain true and generous Buddhists. He also proclaimed that he would not return again to Obtsho. On his northbound journey in Tibet proper, he first arrived at Chöding, where he gave instructions on the four sessions of virtuous practice (*thun bzhi'i dge sbyor*)[30] to mendicants. He then proceeded to Pelding, where, however, he became seriously ill. At that point, he declared that his bones would be thrown away (i.e. his death was imminent) and this

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afterwards (perhaps after two generations) the two became independent, with each accorded the right of appointing its own separate abbatial head.

28 Until the 15th century the abbatial succession at 'Obs-mtsho was regulated by way of the 'uncle-nephew' pattern so prevalent all over Tibet. In Tibet, a founder's descendants and relatives regularly served as patrons and supporters, they often intermarried locally, and thus expanded the properties and territories in their possession. These descendants as hereditary family patriarchs and clans often assumed the title of *chos rje* or "religious lords." Then, during the 15th century, the 8th incumbent Seng-ge rgyal-mtshan of 'Obs-mtsho directly took a wife in order to preserve the family line, after which the rule of celibacy on the throne temporarily ceased to function.

29 The *dge bsnyen* [*chen po*] was a generic name for several local deities in the greater Himalayan region; see e.g. René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1998: 222–23). *dge bsnyen chen po* Jag-pa Me-len later was the chief local protector in western Bhutan. His principal residence is the *mgon khang* at bDe-chen-phug, in the upper part of Thim-phu valley.

30 Virtous practice resulting from four sessions: *snga thun* (dawn), *gung thun* (morning), *phyi thun* (afternoon), and *mtshan thun* (evening).

would take place where his father Pha Tsangpa [Gyare] had been born, whereupon he ordered his attendants to take him to Tshalamjab.[31] Here Terkhungpa passed away after two months of illness.

During cremation, many wondrous relics and images emerged: from his right arm emerged an image of Āvalokiteśvara and eighty-five sacred relics; even from the drops of fats appeared relics (*gdung sha ri ram*); the self-created syllable 'Aḥ' Maṇifested itself from the crown [skull]; from the joints emerged an image of Vajrapani, one deity in the form of Garuḍa, as well as fifty more relics. In this way, through his inconceivable activities of body, speech and mind, he benefitted sentient beings and placed them on the path to enlightenment.

Lama Ön continued to reside at the Obtsho seat. When he was growing old, he installed his nephew Chungtön Dorje as the new seat-holder of Obtsho and gave him a complete set of precepts and instructions. Lama Ön finally passed away at the age of sixty. It is reported that Lama Chungtön also brought tremendous progress and development to Obtsho Chöding. Lama Chungtön placed his nephew, Samten Jangchub on the throne as the 4th Obtsho abbot, before he himself passed away at the age of fifty-three. It was during the reign of Samten Jangchub that the temple was constructed at Obtsho. Lama Samten Jangchub passed away at the age of forty-seven.

Samten Jangchub's nephew Samdrub Yeshe succeeded him as the 5th throne-holder but passed away soon after. Then Lama Drak Bumpa from Pelding ascended the seat for a brief tenure as the 6th abbot, but since he could not discharge the religious duties of the seat imposed upon him due to his advanced age, he instead invited *chöje* Jamyang Sönam Gyalpo to become the 7th Obtsho abbot.

Drak Bumpa's nephew Senge Gyaltshen was installed as the [8th] incumbent. Drak Bumpa later passed away while in retreat at Obtsho

31 Tsh[v]a-lam-rgyab l6it. 'Behind the Salt Trail.' Ardussi again suggests that it may be located in Khu-le district of Myang-stod. It may be linked to the'Brog Tsh[v]a-yul area mentioned earlier.

Chöding. On one occasion, when *chöje* Jamyang was at Obtsho Chöding, it is reported that the twittering sound of a bell was heard from a cave nearby. He said to his attendant that he assumed that a yogi was residing in the cave. He requested his disciple to go and see, and to summon the yogi. Accordingly, the attendant went inside and found that a spiritual master,[32] the direct disciple of Sangye Jotsün of Dremo, was residing there.[33] He was summoned and met with *chöje* Jamyang. The master then chose to reside at the retreat [Obtsho] with *chöje* Jamyang. Later, the monastic seat split into two, upper and lower, resulting in the founding of a branch monastery known as Yonten Dzong (Yon-tan rDzong), with its own lineage.[34]

It was later at Wangrikha[35] [close to Obtsho] that the future Drukpa hierarch and 11th Ralung throne-holder Yeshe Rinchen (1364–1413) was born. Yeshe Rinchen's father Lodrö Senge (1345–1390) was the 8th Ralung hierarch. His mother *lopönma* Semo Trashiden was the

32 The name of the spiritual master appears to have been *grub thob* Khu-khom ras-pa, the disciple of 'Bras-mo *rje btsun* Sangs-rgyas-'bum. He is credited with having founded the seat of Yon-rdzong in La-yag [Bhutan]. See Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 360–61.

33 The 13th century 'Brug-pa ascetic 'Bras-mo *rje btsun* Sangs-rgyas-'bum wrote an important biography of the 'Brug-pa founder gTsang-pa rgya-ras Ye-shes rdo-rje as well as a biography of Nāropa. See *Rva lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng* Vol. 1: 287–452 (ed. Darjeeling 1972).

34 Yon-tan rDzong (said to be founded by 'Bras-mo *rje btsun* Sangs-rgyas-'bum's disciple *grub thob* Khu-khom ras-pa) may be identifiable with the one now located in La-yag [in Bhutan] known as Yon-rdzong which is also known by Yon-rdzong Ri-khrod. The family line that descended from this seat is known as Yon-rdzong *chos rje*. In the latter part, this seat had been administered by *chos rje* rNam-rgyal grags-pa, *Bla-ma spyi dpon* of dKar-spe and his son 'Brug Dar-rgyas, the family descended from Hung-ral Drung-drung of sPa-gro [i.e.sPa-ro or Paro], who in turn descended from Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom zhig-po. Cf. e.g. *Hung ral Drung drung yab sras kyi rnam thar mdo tsam gleng ba Rin po che'i do shal* 2004: 70–72. See also Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 360–6.

35 Location still not identified. Ardussi (2000: 23) again suspects that it may be identifiable with Wang-ri-kha, being the present-day hamlet of Wang-kha or rather with present-day Wang-gzhan-kha. Alternatively, it may be associated with Rang-ri-kha in sPu-ṇa-kha district upstream from Wang-gzhan-kha tributary which empties into the Pho-chu river, several miles up the Pho-chu valley northeast of sPu-ṇa-kha. However, his informants seem uncertain with this identification, and suggest that Wang-ri-kha may be located closer to 'Obs-mtsho.

daughter of a local noble family in Punakha.[36] At the invitation of Yeshe Rinchen's mother, *chöje* Jamyang went to Wangrikha, blessed Yeshe Rinchen and entrusted him to the care of the protective deity Yeshe Gönpo (i.e. Mahākāla). It is recorded that *chöje* Jamyang prophesied that Yeshe Rinchen would become a famous lineage-holder in Ralung. Moreover, he even accompanied the young Yeshe Rinchen when the latter left for the principal Drukpa seat for his ordination. *Chöje* Jamyang returned to Obtsho later on after receiving some teachings from Yeshe Rinchen's father, Lodrö Senge.

Gyaltshen Dorje, a *lopön* who was also a prominent lord in Thed [i.e. Punakha region] was at that time living at Dra Wangkha.[37] He invited *chöje* Jamyang to visit him there, the reason for the invitation being that *lopön* Gyaltshen Dorje had been struck ill. After receiving appropriate empowerment and effective blessings from *chöje* Jamyang, he soon recovered and, as a token of gratitude, offered *chöje* a large number of gifts, including a temple known as Tsigri (rTsig-ri), which was used as the winter residence. This scenic mountain-top was later named Namgyaltse[38] meaning "the Peak of Victory."

Shortly after, *chöje* Jamyang passed away. Since *gyalse* Senge Gyaltshen had no nephew to succeed him, he took a wife [name not recorded] in order to continue the family line and from this marriage two sons were born: Jamyang Sönam Drakpa and *lama* Lodrö Yeshe. Jamyang Sönam Drakpa had a son, *chöje* Guru Chab to whom again two sons were born. They were Senge Sherab and *drung* Nyima Dar. *Drung* Nyima Dar had a son, *chöje* Namkha Pelzang who subsequently married one Rinchen

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36 *Slob dpon ma* Sras-mo bKra-shis-ldan was born into a local noble family of Rin-sdings of sPu-ṇa-kha. She ultimately descended from Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom [='Gro-mgon] zhig-po's son Nyi-ma. See Dargye and Sørensen (2001: XI).

37 The text reads *chu bo'i gra wang kha*, which could also be read as "Wang-kha at the edge/bend of the river" (of Pho-chu).

38 rNam-rgyal-rtse, overlooking the entire valley of sPu-ṇa-kha, is a *lha khang* (actually a *mgon khang*) located on the triangular shaped hillock above the Se'u-la Monastery. See Fig. 83. It is said to be one of the most sacred locations in western Bhutan and the seat of Dam-can sGo-mo, the powerful protective deity of gTer-khung-pa and of sPu-ṇa-kha valley. See also Ardussi (2000: 5, 22).

Pelzom, sister of the 13th Ralung throne-holder and first Gyalwang Drukchen Künga Penjor (1428–1476).[39] From their union a son, *jetsün* Drakpa Rinpoche was born.

Drakpa Rinpoche went to Ralung at an early age, and there received extensive precepts and teachings from his uncle, the 14th Ralung abbot and Drukpa hierarch Ngawang Chögyal (1465–1540)[40] and his son. He also received teachings from one Myang Rabjam, a disciple of Künkhyen Rinpoche (i.e. Pemakarpo). He later returned to his monastic seat at Obtsho where he married a daughter of Thuchen Gyamtsho, son of *Trülku* Penjor Gyaltshen who was considered an incarnation of the Wrathful Guru (Gu-ru Drag-po). They had two sons, namely *drung* Ngawang Dorje and Wangden [dPal-ldan] Gyamtsho. To the latter, four sons were born, out of whom the eldest was *drung* Kargyud who himself had three sons, namely *drung* Chödrak, [Ralung] *umze* Tenzin Drukgye, and [Ralung] *umze* Druk Namgyal. *Drung* Chödrak had three sons, the youngest one being *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen's father, *lama* Ngawang Rabten.

Following the lifespan of Jamgön, the latter's famous son, it was the incumbents of the influential reincarnations of the Amorimu *chöje* that represented the Obtshos. Aside from this lineage, at the family's new main seat at Amorimu, we have little information only from this time on of additional branches of the Obtshos in the Punakha area. They must have gradually dwindled into oblivion.

39 His marriage to the sister of the 13th incumbent of Rva-lung (himself considered the second incarnate of gTsang-pa rGya-ras) may pose some chronological problems, since he must have been very much older than Kun-dga' dpal-'byor. The latter was active in present-day western Bhutan.

40 He was born to lHa-dbang, the younger son of Shes-rab bzang-po. He succeeded Kun-dga' dpal-'byor as the 14th prince-abbot of Rva-lung. He made five or six visits to Bhutan, during which he founded a number of temples and meditation centres within the western region, most of which still exist. See *bKa' brgyud gser 'phreng rgyas pa* (Vol. II, 1982) 542–577.

Chapter II

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

1. Parentage and Childhood

Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen[41] – considered an emanation of the future Buddha Maitreya-nātha – was born into the old aristocratic family of Obtsho in the Female-Fire-Pig Year, corresponding to 1647, at Sharidrak of Gön Amorimu.[42] His father was Ngawang Rabten (1630–1680?) –

41 Aside from the two basic biographies, (*JGNT–I*, *–II*), other primary sources which contain brief biographical references to Byams-mgon Ngag-dbang rgyal-mtshan include *TRNT*: 367b5–68b6.

42 The name A-mo-ri-mu is of unknown origin, however, the former mkhan po of Se'u-la Kar-ma tshe-ring suggests the assertion that the name may have been derived from "*Blam-rim-byon*" or the site of the "Gradual Arrival of Lamas [Lineage]." Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 78 points out that it was also known by "dGon Yul-gsar, "the New Village of dGon" serving as a branch residence of 'Obs-mtsho. The precise date of its first founding is not known. No sources, not even the two versions of Byams-mgon's biography, discuss either the founding of A-mo-ri-mu or the family's subsequent migration. However, it seems likely founding took place prior to Byams-mgon's birth in 1647, as the biography mentions that Byams-mgon was born in A-mo-ri-mu. 'Obs-mtsho itself seems to have functioned as the main seat of 'Obs-mtsho *chos rje* until the end of the 17th century. Ardussi (2000: 12–13) too reports that the favoured position of family members from 'Obs-mtsho in the emerging state hierarchy became a source of jealousy and opposition from



Fig. 6 Jamgön's family house at Amorimu today. It was rebuilt in later period of time. Photo: Daza

the nephew of the first Desi of Bhutan, *umze* Tenzin Drukgye – who descended from the Obtsho *chöje* in Gön. As already noted above, his family line originally stemmed from the great ascetic Terkhungpa, a leading disciple of Tsangpa Gyare, founder of the Drukpa Kagyudpa Order. His mother was Jam Buthrid (b. 1625?) who was descended from the noble family of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo's son Wangchuk, who had his seat at Gön Sangma.[43]

The description of Jamgön's birth carries all the portents of that he would be a remarkable person, as known from similar descriptions of the births of hierarchs and saints. The conception and ensuing birth

other landed gentry families, the most powerful rival being a family from the dKar-sbis village along the west bank of the Mo-chu river north of sPu-ṇa-kha. The rivalry between the two families turned into significant crises (between 1676 and 1700), and on that account the 'Obs-mtsho family had to abandon once and for all the monastery and estates at 'Obs-mtsho and re-establish itself at A-mo-ri-mu. Cf. *JGNT–II*: 60b1–68a6; for some details on the present ancestral home at A-mo-ri-mu see Ardussi 2000: 13–14, 25.

43 dGon gSang-ma. On this monastic seat, see Dargye and Sørensen 1999: VII. It is located in mGar-sa district. Today only ruins remain of the once imposing seat of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom's son dBang-phyug.



Fig. 7 Applique and embroidered *thangka* of Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen (1647–1732), 18th century.



Fig. 8 Modern portrait of Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen from a wall painting. Photo: Yonten Dargye

were accompanied by unusual phenomena and signs, heralding the arrival of this great individual.

At the moment the child was conceived, it is reported that he was both worshipped and safeguarded by the protective deities of his family line day and night, signs for this being that the village became gloriously bright and was suffused with warmth, and that the Gönkhang and altar rooms built by their forefathers appeared saturated in splendour and blessings as never seen before. The grandfather *drung* Chökyi Drakpa[44]

44 His grandfather *drung* Chos kyi grags-pa, also known as *drung* Chos-grags was the father of Ngag-dbang rab-brtan, who was the father of Byams-mgon. *Drung* Chos-grags was the elder brother of the 1st sDe-srid bsTan-'dzin 'brug-rgyas.

also predicted that the child would become a holy person committed to work for the spread of Buddhist teachings and for the well-being of sentient beings.

At the time of the child's birth, his father was still relatively young, having barely reached the age of eighteen. The birth of their first child gave the parents immense joy, but was also a cause of some apprehension. They felt obliged to keep the birth of their first child a secret from their neighbours for fear of any unforeseen mishap befalling the baby. It was therefore in utmost secrecy that they took their son to *zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal at Punakha Dzong to receive his blessings.

The Zhabdrung rejoiced greatly at seeing the child; it is recounted that he instinctively recognized that this child would in the future be greatly beneficial to dissemination of the teachings of the Drukpa Order in particular and of Buddhism in general. This indeed is a standard formula prophesied at the birth of a large number of saints, but in this particular case it was of special significance: the Zhabdrung offered him the name Druk Penjor and treated him most affectionately, blessing the infant's head with mantric syllables, and granted him sacred substance [i.e. pills] and other protective substances. Finally, the Zhabdrung instructed the young parents to keep the child healthy and under good care since he had placed great hope in him.

For the parents, the visit to Punakha had proved most promising and they returned to their village at Amorimu in high spirits and joyful mood. At home, the preparations for the celebration of the birth of the child were soon carried out. These included not least consultation with an astrologer to determine the most auspicious day for celebrating the occasion, which would involve a large gathering together of relatives, families and neighbours.

The boy was brought up in a secure manner. He is described as having had a loving and most compassionate nature from an early age. The biographer seems again here to use standard conventional clichés in his narration of these years, yet this portrait of a loving character (*byams pa'i thugs mnga'*) is evidently accounting for the circumstance why the



Fig. 9 A Sculptural image of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651) called Khamsum Zilnön

child was later considered a Maṇifestation of Maitreya.[45] His unusual qualities were indeed said to have captivated everyone around him, and it was his disposition that would prove his unique spiritual lineage. His grandfather d*rung* Chökyi Drakpa in particular displayed great fondness for his small grandchild. However, while the boy was still young, the grandfather passed away despite receiving comprehensive medical treatment. The funeral rites were carried through in an elaborate manner.

In recounting the early years of Jamgön's childhood, the biography allows us some insight into the warring conflict that raged between Bhutan and Tibet, referring here to the second Tibeto-Mongol allied invasion in 1648/49. The campaign this time was on a larger scale than the earlier warfare which had taken place in 1644. The Tibetan and Mongol troops this time marched as far as Thimphu, Punakha [i.e. Gön area] and Paro. There, they laid siege for several months.[46]

In the midst of these warring skirmishes, the young family was compelled to flee their village and seek refuge in Punakha, in a small hamlet called Gongmo[47] not far from Punakha Dzong. Settling there, they continued to carry out memorial rites for the late grandfather. These included the proper recitation of *Maṇi* prayers (*Om maṇi Padme Hum*, to invite the mercy of the Bodhisattva of Compassion) and the making of ample offerings to the temples as well as to making offerings to the Zhabdrung and his congregation of monks at Punakha.

45 The biography maintains that Byams-mgon (his epithet) was considered a rebirth or Maṇifestation of both Indian and Tibetan masters, e.g. Nāgārjuna and Asanga, but also as Maṇifestation of gNas-brtan 'Od-srung, bDen-smra Drang-srong, *rngog* Chos-sku rdo-rje, *grub-mchog* Zla-ba bzang-po, *grub thob* gTer-khung-pa, dPal-ldan Sems-dpa' chen-po and Don-yod mkhyen-pa [*rje btsun* 'Jam-pa'i dpal], but foremost he is considered a Maṇifestation of Buddha Maitreyanātha, i.e. Byams-pa mgon-po or Byams-mgon. Cf. *mKhan-po Kar-ma Tshe-ring* 2002: 15. Also see *JGNT–II*: 10b2–12b3.

46 *Druk Dron* 1994: 165–68; also see Dargye 2001: 162–63.

47 This place may be identifiable with the present hamlet called Ghomgang (*Go[ng]-mo-gangs), located an hour's walk up the ridge west of sPu-ṇa-kha rDzong. The name is associated with the *gu ma shing*, the *Quercus Lanata*, a type of temperate oak common in Bhutan.



Fig. 10 Modern sculptural portrait of Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen kept at Punakha Dzong. Photo: Sonam Tobgay

The young Jamgön and his parents again had an audience with the Zhabdrung at Punakha Dzong. They received in return the empowerment of longevity and were again presented with sacred pills and protection-threads for their well-being and longevity. Jamgön recalled this experience many years later and subsequently narrated it to his biographer Śākya Rinchen. He vividly recollected that at that point he was barely five years old [early 1651, just before the Zhabdrung entered retreat] and his mother carried him on her back to Punakha for the audience with the Zhabdrung.

When referring to Jamgön, the biography continually uses the epithet *Gyalse Changchubsempa*, Jinaputra Bodhisattva (meaning spiritual son of the conqueror, the Buddha, i.e. a Bodhisattva). At this point

in the narrative, the biography provides a fascinating portrait of the Zhabdrung, similar to the depiction given by two Portuguese Jesuits who had visited the country in 1627.[48]

The young Jamgön and his parents returned to their village in Amorimu. It must be presumed that the conflict between Bhutanese and Tibetan troops in the Gön area had gradually subsided for the time being, although the biography is silent on this. It was during this period that the parents became quite apprehensive that their son – judging from his personal disposition – might at a later stage want to choose the life of a monk rather than that of a householder who would carry on the family line. Jamgön had a younger brother and sister by then, but the parents still hoped that their oldest son would carry on the family in unbroken succession. For that reason, when their first born son was only about seven or eight years old, the parents made the customary arrangements for his future betrothal to a young girl from a noble family descended from Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo.[49] Their strategy, however, was doomed to fail.

2. Education and Monastic Training

When Jamgön reached the age of ten, his parents took him to a learned teacher living in Punakha called *lopön* Sangye Lingpa, under whom he first began learning to read and write and, importantly, to memorize all the preliminary ritual prayers. The boy proved diligent, bright and intelligent, learning with ease whatever was taught to him, and his natural talent for learning was soon noticed by senior monks.

The year 1656 brought the sad tidings that the illustrious first Desi, Jamgön's great uncle *umze* Tenzin Drukgye, had passed away at

48 See Aris 1986: 170–82; 1979: 217–18.

49 It is conceivable that the young girl, Byams-mgon's future betrothed, was descended from the family originally stemming from one of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom zhig-po's many sons, dBang-phyug (Wangchuk) who in the 13th century had been designed by his father to look after Thed (sPu-ṇa-kha) and dGon regions. It was from dBang-phyug that the local noble family (*zhal ngo*) of dGon gSang-ma originated.



Fig. 11 The 1st Desi *umze* Tenzin Drukgye (1591–1656) from a wall painting. Photo: Daza

Cheri monastery. As great nephew to the late Desi, he now had the opportunity to witness the funeral rites at Cheri, and was accompanied there by family and other officiating monks responsible for conducting the rites.[50] *La-ngon* Tenzin Drukdra (i.e. Tenzin Drukdra who was recognised as an incarnation of La-ngon *chöje*),[51] the then Paro Pönlop (local ruler) was soon after enthroned as the 2nd Desi of Bhutan, and as ruler proved very affectionate towards the young Jamgön.

Jamgön learned the art of calligraphy from *drungyig* Zimche [*lopön* gZims-chen-pa] also known as Gewa Gyamtsho, the most skilled and learned person in Bhutan at that time. He also learned the classical *lantsā* and *wartula* scripts from *lopön* Tshewang Dorje. The 2nd Desi himself keenly observed the daily progress displayed by the young Jamgön and was highly impressed by his spontaneous mastery of the subjects taught.

It is reported that throughout his regular visits to his parents' home in the coming period, the young boy increasingly felt how bothersome and futile a householder's life could be, and seeing the hardships met

50 One report recounts that the deceased's corpse was preserved and the funeral was undertaken only in 1681, presided over by the 2nd rJe mKhan-po bSod-nams 'Od-zer (1613–89; rg. 1672–89) during the time when rGyal-sras bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas (rg. 1680–1694) was reigning as Desi. Cf. *Druk Dron* 201; *TRNT* 1382–6.

51 The La-sngon *sprul sku* bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-sgra was born in 1602 at Gling in Mang-sde (in Krong-gsar) and was commonly regarded as the illegitimate son of Zhabs-drung's father bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma. After the demise of the 1st Desi, he was enthroned as 2nd Desi (rg. 1656–1667). For details of his life, see *Druk Dron* 202–12.

with in his village only strengthened his decision to join the monkhood. Naturally, the biography at this stage repeatedly stresses that it was due to Jamgön's karmic predisposition that he realized that by leading a religious life he would be able to release himself from the agony and distress of worldly affairs.

Another standard feature of his otherwise overly regulated childhood which displays his predestined disposition, was that it is reported that when he did play with his fellow comrades, he would behave as though he was superior to them, assuming the role of a religious teacher, sitting on an elevated seat. He also used to imitate a yogi in meditation and at times he behaved as if he were bestowing religious instruction and empowerment. This behaviour is said to have so highly impressed his playmates that they used to gather around him and treat him with great respect. He was predestined to become a great lord of Dharma.

It was around that time that Jamgön expressed the desire to wear a monk's robe and to take up religious practice formally. He consequently went to his parents to request their permission for him to wear the saffron-coloured robe. His parents, however, were unwilling to give their consent.

Rather than remaining as a householder amid wealth like that of royal empire,
It is more delightful to relinquish [worldly life] and beg alms food.
Rather than dressing fancily in clothes of silk brocade,
It is better to wear a simple woven saffron-rob.
Rather than clinging to multi-storied mansion,
It is more joyful to rest beneath the trees or in the caves in distant secluded places.
Rather than riding powerful noble horses,
It is more comfortable to walk on foot with a walking stick.
Rather than being under the care of numerous offsprings and attendants,
It is more joyful to be a solitary sage.[52]

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52 *Op. cit. JGNT-I*: 29b530a1: *khyim gnas rgyal srid lta bu'i dpal 'byor las // rab tu byung nas bsod snyoms byed pa skyid // gos bzang rin chen rgyan gyi spras pa las // 'phyar dar khrod kyi ngur smrig 'dzin pa legs // ba gam can gyi mkhar gyi bdag*

Around that time, while Jamgön and his father were residing at Punakha Dzong, his father was summoned by the Gongsa Thri Rinpoche – in other words, the 2nd Desi Tenzin Drukdra. The Desi asked the father to allow one of his sons [actually the Desi was indirectly referring to the young Jamgön] to join the monkhood. The Desi intuitively knew that the boy would be beneficial to the Drukpa Kagyud teachings in the future, and therefore wanted to groom him spiritually under his own personal care and guidance. The first thought that came to the father's mind was that young Jamgön was not only the eldest son, but also the one closest to his heart, and for these reasons he did not want him to leave home. Instead he thought of sending the younger son Ngawang Phüntsho to join the monkhood as it was also a customary obligation to send one of the sons of a family to the monastery.[53]

Jamgön nevertheless was secretly summoned by the Desi. At their meeting, the Desi looked affectionately at the boy and openly expressed his wish to see Jamgön join the monkhood, adding that he would provide him with all necessary means both at that time and also in the future and would counsel him carefully. Upon hearing these encouraging words, the boy is said to have rejoiced and taken by surprise, he reportedly thought to himself: "Am I taking a bath in camphor?" (*ga pur gyi dag byed dam*), expressing his sheer joy at the prospect of being clad in the robes of a monk.

'dzin las // bas mtha'i gnas mal shing drung brag phug skyid // stobs ldan shugs 'chang rta bzang zhon pa las // mkhar bsil thogs nas rkang thang rgyu ba bde // 'khor gyog bu tsha'i 'gab tshul mang po las // drang srong tshul gnas gcig pu 'dug pa dga'.

53 Traditionally, the supreme position held by monks in Bhutanese society enabling them to reach the highest position in state, and the privileges that they enjoyed, as well as the deep religious habits of the people, all combined to attract to the priestly ranks enormous numbers of recruits, particularly between the 17th and 20th centuries. At the same time, compulsion was also exercised by the priestly government in the shape of a recognized tax of children to be turned into monks, namely the *btsun khral* or "monk tax" imposed especially during the reign of the 4th sDe-srid, *rgyal-sras* bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas. Every family dedicated at least one of its sons to the monastery, usually the first born or the favourite son. The other sons married in order to continue the family name and legacy, and hence to act as the bread-winners. Many families often contributed more than one son, as the youth were eager to join the order.

Following this incident, Jamgön's father was now urgently commanded by the Desi to admit the boy into the monkhood; the father did not dare oppose the Desi's request and accordingly made the necessary arrangements. The boy was given appropriate advice and counselled about the future course of his life, and in particular what he should and what he should not do as a monk.

The night before the boy's departure, both father and boy slept in the same bed exchanging their feelings with one another. They were both in a sad mood, but the boy at the same time was also excited at the prospect of leaving next day to join his fellow monk novices. At the break of dawn as the sun was about to rise above the top of the mountain, the boy was given a proper bath and a hair cut, signalling that he was giving up a prospective householder's life. In the family's shrine room, he received blessings and was then robed in the saffron-coloured monk's garb. He was ceremoniously accompanied to Punakha Dzong and into the presence of the image of Buddha Śākyamuni, where he made prostrations and offerings. At that point, he had reached the age of sixteen years, corresponding to the Male Water-Tiger Year or 1662.

Zhabdrung Rinpoche had in 1651 entered into a twelve year retreat at Punakha Dzong.[54] The young Jamgön received his proper monk hair-cutting initiation in front of the chamber where the Zhabdrung was said to be in retreat. He there received the ordination name of Ngawang Gyaltshen. Clearly, he was one of the few or even the last to receive both ordination and the hair-cutting ceremony in front of the chamber while the Zhabrung was in retreat.[55]

Jamgön had an audience with the 1st Je Khenpo, Pekar Jungney (1602–1672/73)[56] and he later recalled this audience, describing the hierarch

54 At the age of 58, Zhabs-drung had withdrawn from state affairs and entered into his final retreat at sPu-ṇa-kha. He probably died not long after, but his death was kept secret until 1706, in other words for over 50 years during which time, he was treated exactly as if he was still alive. See *TRNT* 49b5–50a4; Aris 1979: 233–42.

55 Lit. *zhabs drung rin po che'i sku mtshams dgag nas dbu skra'i gtsug phud phul.*

56 Pad-dkar 'byung-gnas was a remote descendant of Pha-jo's son Nyi-ma. He was appointed abbot at lCags-ri (Cheri) in 1627. Before entering his retreat session,

as being peaceful, gentle looking, and virtuous. He was entrusted to the good care of his relative *kudrung* Chökyi Gyamtsho, who had been assigned as his personal tutor. On a carefully calculated auspicious day, he was ordained as a novice by Pekar Jungney, who personally served as *upādhyāya* (spiritual guide) while *gelong* Dulwa Dzinpa Chenpo[57] acted as *karmācārya* (officiant), in a ceremony attended by other teachers as well, and thus officially became a monk of the state monastic establishment.

Following his ordination, in the coming years he observed the strict disciplines as laid down in the monastic codex. He made good progress in this area. He commenced his ecclesiastical studies, gradually committing to memory a large number of brief or preliminary ritual and esoteric texts. He also studied how to make *torma* (sacrificial figures) and other ritual offerings, and within a short span of time he became well-versed in all these areas of study.[58]

In 1667, when Jamgön had reached the age of twenty-two, *la-ngon* Tenzin Drukdra passed away and one year later *chöje* Mingyur Tenpa,[59]

Zhabs-drung promoted him to become the 1st rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan with the responsibilities of looking after the monastic body and ensuring maintenance of the discipline and purity of the Buddhist teachings and moral code. This appointment took place around 1651.

57 The *vinayadhara* Śākya 'od-zer was a leading disciple of Zhabs-drung, registered as the upholder of the transmission of Vinaya codes ("holder of vinaya vows;" *sdom rgyun 'dzin pa*).

58 The numerous preliminary ritual and esoteric texts he studied included *sDom gsum mdzes rgyan*, *bDe mchog rtsa rgyud kyi bsdus pa nyung ngu'i rgyud kyi rnam bshad gsang ba'i de kho na nyid gsal bar byed pa* written by Bu-ston, the *dGyes rdor rtsa rgyud brtag gnyis pa* and the *Dus 'khor bsdus rgyud*, in other words the tantric cycles of Saṃvara, Hevajra and Kālacakra.

59 *Chos rje* Mi-'gyur brtan-pa (1613–81) was born in sMin-chud (of Myang-stod district of Tibet), also known as Dam-chos lhun-grub. Like Zhabs-drung he too was a Tibetan immigrant who would go on to influence the future direction of Bhutan as an emerging state. He became a monk and received as *curricula* the entire 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud teachings. Since his migration to Bhutan, he became one of the most trusted followers of the Zhabs-drung and in a decisive way served the cause of the 'Brug-pa unification. He took up an important portfolio in the government as the first Chos-rtse dpon-slob (Chötse Pönlop) in 1647. As Zhabs-drung's representative, he brought the entire central and eastern region under central government rule. He became the 3rd sDe-srid in 1668. Governing the weak

– then Pönlop of Trongsa – was enthroned as the 3rd Desi. Jamgön's father Ngawang Rabten was at that time in his late thirties. Throughout the son's biography, the father is described as being a wise, kind-hearted and honest man, committed, competent and capable of solving almost any type of problem. For these qualities, he was uniformly lauded and respected by large sections of society in Bhutan. From a young age he had attended on his uncle, the 1st Desi *umze* Tenzin Drukgye, and thus gained good insight into the country's administrative affairs. Jamgön's biographer describes the relationship between the two to be like father and son, collaborating in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

On Jamgön's personal initiative and at his request – a wish which surely reflected Jamgön's own interest in religious architecture and art – the 2nd Desi constructed an *utse* (high tower) at Punakha Dzong. Shrine-rooms with numerous magnificent images and wall paintings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were subsequently constructed inside the tower. In 1667, just before his passing away the 2nd Desi had started to build the eight Sugata Chörtens with a three-storeyed Trashi Gomang [presently known as Ngulbum Chörten] as centrepiece to enshrine images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. After he died that same year, the remaining work was carried out by Jamgön and Mingyur Tenpa together, and completed in 1670, together with magnificent wall-paintings depicting the former masters and saints of the Kagyud lineage. Following completion, a grand five-day consecration ceremony was held, presided over by the 2nd Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer (1613–1689; *rg.* 1672–1689)[60] and *gyalse*

state in unruly times of great inner and outer opposition, his rule necessarily was harsh and uncompromising. He retired in 1680, only to pass away while in retreat the following year. For details, see *Druk Dron* 213–44; *TRNT* 115a5–16a2.

60 bSod-nams 'od-zer was born in 1613 into the family descending from Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po at dKar-sbe bSe-lung in sPu-na-kha District. At the age of ten, he went to lCags-ri and attended upon Zhabs-drung, where he received ordination from lHa-dbang blo-gros. He subsequently received a complete set of precepts and instructions of the 'Brug-pa lore from the above two masters and became a highly accomplished master, capable of displaying miracles on many occasions. He headed as chief bla-ma, the rDo-lung dGon-pa in Shar Kho-thang-kha. At the age of 60, he was investitured as the 2nd rJe mKhan-po in 1672 and reigned for 17 years, and he died in 1689. For details, see *JGNT–II*: 56b5–58b5 and his biography penned by Ngag-dbang dpal-ldan rgya-mtsho entitled *rDo rje 'dzin pa chen po*

Tenzin Rabgye (1638–1696).[61]

Jamgön made a magnificent embroidered brocade *thangka* depicting the chain of former existences of saints or incarnate lamas of the Drukpa Order. It is also recorded that he commissioned the building of one hundred *maṇi*-walls and *chörtens* engraved with sacred prayers (*man thang mchod rten ma ni'i rgyan can*) at the important sites.

In 1671, under the instruction of the 3rd Desi, Jamgön carried out the task of renovating Semtokha Dzong (built in 1629) which had been destroyed by fire. A huge gilded image of Lord Buddha surrounded by the eight Principal Bodhisattva Sons was built. He also commissioned the erection of statues of the Eleven-faced Āvalokiteśvara in the form of "King of Space" (*Gaganarāja, Nam mkha'i rgyal po*), the Four-armed (*caturbhūja, phyag bzhi pa*) [Āvalokita] Tara, a temple enshrining Magön Chamdrel (*Ma-mgon lCam-dral*) i.e. Mahākāla, Brother and Sisters. Surrounding the central tower of the Dzong, images of the deities of Confession of Downfalls from Bodhicitta (*ltung bshags lha tshogs*), the Sixteen Arhats (*gnas brtan bcu drug*), the Panditas and Siddhas of India and Tibet and images of the saints and masters of Kagyudpa were set up, all carved on slate plates. The biography states that the blessings of water trickling from these slate images could be seen even in the author's time.[62]

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bSod nams 'od zer gyi rnam thar sNyan tshig 'dod 'jo'i 'khri shing. Cf. also *LCB–II*, 39a2–b4.

61 *rGyal sras* bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas was born in 1638 to father Mi-pham Tshe-dbang bstan-'dzin (1574–1643), the then rTa-mgo *chos rje* and to mother *Chos mdzad ma* Dam-chos bstan-'dzin (1606–1660), stemming from the family of the lCang-sgang-kha *chos rje*. On his father's side, he was related to Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal. The latter's affection for him meant that he was consciously groomed and promoted as the personal disciple by Zhabs-drung. The title 'r*Gyal sras*' indicates that he was regarded as the spiritual son of and hence natural heir to Zhabs-drung. After *chos rje* Mi-'gyur brtan-pa's demise, he then formally assumed the highest post as "*rGyal tshab*", or "ruling successor" to Zhabs-drung, i.e. he formally became the spiritual head of the state as well as the 4th sDe-srid, starting from 1680 until 1694. He was the only ruler after Zhabs-drung who held two titles, combining the complete religious and temporal powers (*chos srid zung 'brel gyi bdag po*). For details, see *TRNT*.

62 The consecration ceremony which was presided over by r*gyal sras* bsTan-'dzin

3. Religious Studies

In his early twenties, Jamgön is recorded to have helped promote the principles behind the code of conduct and etiquette that was introduced for the monks. His senior tutor was the 1st Je Khenpo Pekar Jungney, from whom he received an extensive amount of teachings, esoteric cycles and initiations.[63] It is said that he eliminated the crucial Four Doors of Downfalls (*ltung ba 'byung ba'i sgo bzhi*), by composing his mind in such a way as to regard his spiritual friends (*kalyanāmitra*) – that is his teachers – as physicians, the precept he received as medicine and he himself as the patient, knowing that the best remedy would be nothing but the intense practice. He was mindful of whatever teachings he received and he intended not to let them be forgotten.

The biographer – albeit utterly laudatory in style and eulogizing in tenor as custom and good taste dictated – provides a portrait of Jamgön's religious and personal development. He allows us a glimpse of Jamgön's personality, and ultimately his conduct, his personal integrity, and his noble social standing. It seems that Jamgön's was an ideal life, conducted as would be expected from a highly esteemed individual possessing all the virtues and qualities required to become a true master.

From the learned *lopön* Ugyen Tshering, he received thorough choreographic training in the performance of sacred ritual dance or *cham* (*'cham*).[64] From the Zhabdrung's direct disciple, *lopön* Tenzin Chöphel,

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rab-rgyas lasted five days, during which it is said that holy water trickled from the slate plates. Cf. *TRNT* 90a5–b3; *Druk Dron* 220–21.

63 He received different teachings; empowerments and reading-authorisations mainly related to Avalokiteśvara, Akṣobhya, Amitabha, Bhairava, etc. in addition to the root tantric cycle of Hevajra. For details see *JGNT –II* 44b3f.

64 Relying upon a number of explicatory tantric texts (*bshad rgyud, vyākhyatantra*) [written by Padma dkar-po and his disciples, such as Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje] namely the [*mGon po*] *dNgos grub 'byung ba'i rgyud, sngon 'byung, khrag mtsho khol ma* as well as the basic Indic treatice on metrics (*sdeb sbyor*) by Ratnākaraśanti, etc. Byams-mgon analysed properly the performance of sacred dances. He was trained in accordance with the choreographic guidelines laid down in *mGon po dgongs 'dus kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i sa 'dul gyi 'chams* composed by the 1st rJe mKhan-po Pad-dkar 'byung-gnas in making body gestures [of action] which included assuming a wrathful or frightful mien. His practice and training covered nine different types

he learned the art of drawing Maṇḍalas adhering to the four classes of Tantra.[65] From Sherab Yözer, the presiding *yangpön (dbyangs pa'i slob dpon)*, head of the liturgical division of the monk body, he learned the procedure of ritual chanting for different liturgic practices, based on the *Yang yig drizai gyud mang*[66] composed by *künkhyen* Pemakarpo (1527–1592), in particular the delicate tonalities involved in chanting ritual texts related to Mahākāla (Ye-shes mgon-po) and Śrī Devī (dPal-ldan lha-mo), the principal Drukpa protective deities.

He further mastered the root verses [i.e. texts] of ritual performance, the rituals of magic subjugation (*mngon spyod kyi phyag len*), the art of decoration and arrangement of altars, the root texts related to mastering of symbolic hand gestures (*phyag rgya'i rtsa tshig*), and how to use cymbals, drums, bells, and so forth. In the end, he completely mastered all aspects of ritual and liturgical practices – the tenfold ways of tantric practices.[67]

Tsipön Druk Penjor taught him the complete system of astrology, both Kartsi (*dkar rtsis*) and Nagtsi (*nag rtsis*) based on *künkhyen* Lhawang Lodrö's seminal work *Dän dü kyi tsi* (*gDan dus kyi rtsis*) which he

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of bodily gestures of performing the wrathful aspects of protective deity Mahākāla which included *'bag 'chams* (mask dance) and *zor 'chams* (dance without mask). In addition, he was trained in the performative dances of *rigs ma bcu drug*, the dances of the eight siddhas, the *gtum rngam*, and the celebrated *Guru mtshan brgyad*, etc. The training mainly focused on the position of the feet, the appropriate *vajra* gaze and the projection of different wrathful poses and miens (*rkang stabs*, *rdo rje'i lta stangs*, *khro bo du ma spros*). See *JGNT–II* 35b4–36a4.

65 He learned how to draw different lines which include *tshangs thig* (central vertical line), *zur thig* (diagonal line), *rtsa thig* (channel/energy lines) and the so-called *las thig* (activity line). At the same time, he learned to use colours proportionately, to draw intricate patterns and to perform rituals according to the distinct instructions of *maṇḍala* drawings.

66 See Padma dKar-po, *brTan srungs dngos grub 'byung ba'i dByangs yig 'dri za'i rgyud mang* 1a1– 4b3.

67 It included 1. *dkyil 'khor* (maṇḍala), 2. *ting 'dzin* (samadhi/contemplation), 3. *phyag rgya* (mudra), 4. *stangs thabs* (step/movement), 5. *'dug thabs* (sitting posture), 6. *bzlas brjod* (recitation), 7. *sbyin sreg* (homa/fire pūjā), 8. *mchod pa* (offering), 9. *las la sbyar ba* (application of the activities), 10. *slar bsdu ba* (re-gathering/drawing). Cf. *JGNT–II* 37a4–5.

had written following his arrival in Bhutan from Tibet.[68] Paying careful attention to *khedrub* Pekar Lhüṇdrub[69] – who was also a master practitioner of yogic channels, winds and essence (*rtsa rlung thig*) – he learned the root grammars.[70] He also studied the Indian poetic master Daṇḍin's seminal work, Kavyādarśa. He became well-versed in the art of grammar and a master of traditional poetic form, enabling him to compose beautiful verses such as this:

If you pursue various discursive thoughts further and further
Your thoughts will only roam like a steady flowing river
Hence, no matter what appearance may arise to the six senses
Your discursive thoughts will calm if you leave them in their unaltered natural state![71]

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68 lHa-dbang blo-gros (1549/50–1634) was Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che's main tutor and had tutored the latter while in Tibet. He was invited from Chu-nang rMug-sde in gTsang to Bhutan, and arrived in Bhutan at the age of 71 (prob. 1620–21), accompanied by his attendant Pad-dkar bkra-shis (born in Fire Dog = Earth Dog; 1598–1682; see the latter's biography entitled *sKal bzang Yid kyi bdud rtsi*; 4b3f). See also *ZDNT*, 92b5–93b1. The great lHa-dbang blo-gros principally taught at lCags-ri monastery and is said to have produced many excellent disciples. He is credited with the introduction of the study of astrology in Bhutan. He also wrote some of the best known expositions in this field, which today still form an important part of the 'Brug-pa ritual and liturgic literature.

His three main astrological works are:

1. *gDan dus thun mong gi rtsis gzhi,*
2. *rTsis gzhung dus thun mong gi nges pa gsar du bkod pa dang bcas pa'i lag len lhan thabs gsal ba'i sgron me* and
3. *gDan dus thun mong gi dus rtsis bltas chog dpyod ldan rig pa.*

69 Pad-dkar lhun-grub (1640–1699) was born at bSe-lung Brag-gong of dKar-sbi in sPu-ṇa-kha district. He entered the monkhood at the age of 11. Attending on a number of renowned spiritual masters of his time, such as rJe Pad-dkar 'byung-gnas, rJe bSod-nams 'od-zer, gTsang-mkhan dPal-ldan rgya-mtsho (1610–84), and sGang-sprul bsTan-'dzin legs-pa'i don-grub (1645–1726), he became an accomplished master both in bKa'-brgyud and rNying-ma lore. He became the 3rd rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan (rg. 1689–1697). After reigning for eight years, he retired and proceeded to sPus-mo bDe-chen chos-'khor where he died at the age of 60; see also *LCB–II* 139b–140b [= 280–82].

70 His study of grammar included the seminal treatises, *Sum cu pa* and *rTags 'jug*, the commentary on *bod kyi brda'i bstan bcos Za ma tog*, and also guidelines for reading mantra-scripts (*sngags kyi klog thabs*), and the five sections of rules for euphonic conjunction (*sGra ka la pa'i mtshams sbyor le'u lnga pa*) which included all the rules of conjunctions.

71 *JGNT-I* 38b5–39a3: *rnam rtog rnam rtog du ma'i rjes 'brang na // chu bo'i gzhung*



Fig. 12 The 1st Je Khenpo Pekar Jungney (1602–1672/73) from a wall painting. Photo: Sonam Tobgay

Pekar Lhündrub taught Jamgön grammar and poetics, and also answered his pupil's queries concerning difficult points relating to his understanding of the Vinaya, Sūtra, and the Abhidharma, thereby clarifying Jamgön's lingering doubts on a number of issues. Jamgön also studied the art of iconometrics, learning how to make correctly proportioned and sized images and stūpas, and about the benefits which would accrue from the erecting of stūpas and the making of representations of saints, theoretical knowledge he could derive from many relevant Sūtras.[72] He attended upon some of the most well-known artists of his time, under whom he learned the practical side of applied iconometrics. His main reference source for study of iconometrics was the illustrious *künkhyen* Pemakarpo's guide on sculpture, itself derived from the commentary in the Vimaloṣṇiśa, Sahajavilasa's classical treatise on the architectonics of the stūpa. Jamgön's biographer describes him as having acquired in full the three supreme qualities characterizing a learned man: erudition, virtue and nobility (*mkhas btsun bzang gsum*).

Around that time, an outbreak of smallpox raged in Bhutan. Spreading rapidly through the human vector, the dreaded disease caused a large death-toll among the people. Most of the monk body contracted smallpox and Jamgön was not spared in this regard. He fell seriously ill,

bzhin rgyun chad med par rgyu // de phyir tshogs drug yul snang ci shar yang // ma bcos so mar gzhag na rtog pa zhi.

72 Cf. for details *JGNT–II* 40b3–41b3.

and decided to go to Trashi Drumkar.[73] Although ailing when he arrived there, he slowly recovered. A certain physician arrived from Tibet about this time, a man who was well-known as highly skilled in treating smallpox. On the instructions of the Desi, he was assigned the task of treating the ailing monks. When the epidemic had gradually subsided, the 1st Je Khenpo Pekar Jungney ordered the erection of a *chörten* at Chang Lingmithang.[74] According to this order, Jamgön carried out the part of the work that consisted in writing small rolls of mantric formulas to be inserted in the central life-pole (*srog shing, yaṣti*), and of making *zung* (*gzungs*) scrolls and votive *tsha tsha* to be inserted into the great stūpa as consecratory dhāranī (mystic formula) fillings. On this occasion, Je Pekar Jungney, noticing the workers' fatigue, offered words of encouragement and assured them that after the *chörten* had been completed, he would make it move by way of his spiritual power. Thus, at the time of the *chörten's* consecration, everyone present is reported to have seen it moving all of its own accord, and later it is reported that Jamgön himself saw it move twice.[75]



Fig. 13 Chörten near Thimphu Dzongkhag Office built and consecrated by the 1st Je Khenpo. Photo: Daza

73 bKra-shis 'Brum-dkar. The very name suggests that it was a high-lying alpine location, not frequented by wayfarers from contaminated areas, where those who had contracted smallpox could seek recovery or recreation. Exact location is not known.

74 The Gling-ma Plain (*thang*) of Cang [> lCang-ma] area, the "Willow Area" = Thim-phu. The *mchod rten* [which is in the shape of "Khang gzugs mchod rten"] still stands in front of the present Thim-phu District administration office, and it is believed to be one of the most sacred *mchod rten* in the Thim-phu area. See Fig. 13.

75 Cf. *TRNT* 81b1–6.



Fig. 14 The 2nd Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer (1613–1689) from a wall painting at Punakha Dzong. Photo: Daza

The Je Khenpo Pekar Jungney suddenly left his bodily form (i.e. passed away) in 1672, while still ruling,[76] and subsequently his successor, Sönam Yözer (1613–1689) was formally investitured as the 2nd Je Khenpo of Bhutan (*rg.* 1672–1689). It was decided – as an auspicious sign – to undertake the final ordination ceremony of Jamgön during the Je Khenpo's enthronement ceremony. Before a large assemblage of sacred images and objects in the congregation hall at Punakha Dzong,

76 He is recorded to have died at 69, falling from a horse at lCang Gling-ma-thang (Chang Lingmathang) when the monk body was coming from the winter residence of sPu-ṇa-kha to the summer residence of bKra-shis chos-rDzong, Thim-phu. Cf. *LCB–II* 138b6–139a2; *TRNT* 81b1–82b6.

Jamgön went through his final ordination ceremony (*bsnyen rdzogs*) in the presence of the 2nd Je Khenpo who served as *upādhyāya*, spiritual master Thinley Drukgyal who acted as *karmācārya*, *chöje* Pekar Dönden who acted as *guhyācārya* (Sacred Master) and a large gathering of monks.

In the following period, Jamgön continued to receive teachings and empowerments from his Root-Lama, the 2nd Je Khenpo. Among his main study curricula, he in particular received the four complete empowerments of the Maṇḍala (mystic cosmic diagram, signifying the abode of a deity) of the Primordial Buddha Vajradhara, the extraordinary tantric path which is said to lead directly to Buddhahood.[77] On the instruction of the Desi, *chöje* Mingyur Tenpa, Jamgön went to Rinpung Dzong in Paro to oversee construction and installation of the *götor* (*gos gtor*).[78] Upon completion, it was installed in the Gönkhang dedicated to the protective deity Mahākāla.

One *jetsün* Künzang Rechen[79] was residing at the court of the Paro Pönlop at that time.[80] He met Jamgön and paid him the utmost respect.

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77 The other empowerments he received refer to the Outer Sādhana of Buddha Amitayus, Single Deity, Single Vase (*tshe dpag med phyi sgrub lha gcig bum gcig*), the Inner Sādhana for the Manifold Deities in Peaceful Aspect (*nang sgrub zhi ba lha mang*), the Single Hero Hayagrīva (*rta mgrin dpa'o gcig pa*), the Sādhana of Ferocious Garuḍa (*gtum po khyung sham can*), of the Two-headed Varahi (*phag mo gdong gnyis zhal ma*), the reading authorization of Guru in Peaceful Form (*Gu ru zhi ba'i rjes gnang*), the Vision of Wrathful Kilaya (*zhal gzigs drag po kilaya*), Guru in his Wrathful Aspect (*bla ma drag po*) as well as the comprehensive Compendium of Sādhana Manuals, known as the Ocean of Visualization Manuals (*sgrub thabs rgya mtsho; sādhanasārgara*).

78 The *gos gtor* (See Fig. 16) is a silk or brocade-made effigy with thread-cross, made in order to embody the essence of a protective deity (*srung ma*); Byams-mgon was renowned for his mastery in making such effigies, and his biography (*JGNT-II, passim*) in fact records his numerous trips to different parts of Bhutan (e.g. to Krong-gsar, Bya-dkar, Glang-ma-lung, etc) to make and install such sacred objects.

79 Kun-bzang ras-chen's identity is not clearly known. There appears to be a biography entitled *Kun bzang ras chen gyi rnam thar* authored by one Legs-bshad rgya-mtsho'i sde, but we have been unable to locate it. We only possess scattered references to this great 'Brug-pa master, such as the present biography and that of Śā-kya rin-chen.

80 It either refers to the reigning dPon-slob, i.e. 'Brug Don-grub or to bSod-nams pad-dkar.



Fig. 15 Chökhor Rabtentse Dzong in Trongsa. Photo: Sonam Tobgay

Jamgön authorized him to recite the sādhana visualization manual related to Avalokiteśvara, and subsequently gave him instruction on how to recite *maṇi*-mantra (prayers to invoke the mercy of the Bodhisattva of Compassion). *Jetsün* Künzang Rechen was in fact the first person to receive teachings from Jamgön. Jamgön then returned from Paro to Punakha, then known as "the *Zhung*."[81] Shortly after his return, he went to Chökhor Rabtentse Dzong (Chos-'khor Rab-brtan-rtse) in Trongsa, to install another *götor*. Following that, he returned to the capital. *Gyalse* Tenzin Rabgye was delivering various teachings to the monk body when Jamgön reached Punakha, so Jamgön also received all teachings related to the Drukpa Order[82] from him at that time.

81 The word *gzhung*, literally means "centre" or "capital" and in Tibet as later in Bhutan refers to the central government. It here refers to sPu-ṇa-kha. Much later when Thim-phu (bKra-shis chos rDzong) was officially recognized as the seat of the government and as capital, the word referred to this site.

82 The teachings included the four complete empowerments of the Thirteen Deities of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala (*'khor lo sdom pa lha bcu gsum pa'i dkyil 'khor*), the empowerment, transmission and authorization of the Five Coemergent Deities (*lhan skyes lha lnga ma*), the Quintessential Sublime Vision of Mahākāla (*mgon po dgongs 'dus*), to the White Manjuśrī (*'jam dkar*), the Vision of Wrathful Kilaya (*zhal gzigs drag po kilaya*), the Guru in his Wrathful Aspect (*bla ma drag po*), Guru in his Peaceful Aspect (*Gu ru zhi ba*), the Ocean of Sādhana Manuals (*sgrub thabs rgya mtsho*) and so on. The other teachings he received included the Minor



Fig. 16 *Götor/Tendö* installed by Jamgön at Chökhor Rabtentse Dzong in Trongsa.
Photo: Sonam Tobgay

4. Warring Conflict with the Tibetans and Internal Strife

Around 1675, the Tibetan Government dispatched a considerable number of troops to invade Bhutan and the country once again was confronted by hostile alien intruders.[83] This incident caused great concern to Jamgön. A peace agreement between the two countries – again locked in combat – was proposed, but in vain. The invaders attacked from different routes – one contingent of troops camped and besieged "The Cliff of the Dead Horse" (*rta shi'i brag*) in eastern Bhutan, a second contingent captured Jakar Dzong in Bumthang in a surprise foray, and another large group made an incursion through Lingzhi. Confronted thus, people panicked, and many were in despair.

The Government of Bhutan finally dispatched a strong force to deal with the invaders, ordering that all the local administrative seats, mountain paths and precipices, passes and valleys, as well as bridges should be protected by all available means. As Jamgön's father Ngawang Rabten was regarded as highly competent in military matters, Desi Mingyur Tenpa assigned him as military commander in the eastern districts (i.e. Bumthang region). Ngawang Rabten promptly took up this new responsibility.

As commander, Ngawang Rabten led the troops to the central region, where Jakar Dzong had already been captured by the Tibetan troops.

Root Tantras of Saṃvara (*bde mchog rtsa rgyud nyung ngu*), the Spiritual Song of Mi-la ras-pa (*rje btsun rin po che'i rnam mgur*), the Biographies of the 'Brug-pa hierarchs, i.e. Golden Rosary of the bKa'-brgyud Masters (*dkar rgyud gser 'phreng*), the Initiation of Seven-fold Virtues (*dge sbyor bdun pa'i khrid*), and the Series of Recitation and Offering of the glorious 'Brug-pa Order (*dpal 'brug pa'i mchod brjod rim pa*).

83 A peace settlement had been made between Bhutan and Tibet in 1666, but it only lasted for seven years. On the instigation of one Mon-pa A-[m]chog, the alleged leader of Sikkim, the Tibetans invaded Bhutan in 1675/76 during the reign of the Regent Blo-bzang sbyin-pa (rg. 1675–1679). In Bhutan, this invasion is usually regarded as the fifth successive Tibetan armed attack. The Bhutanese troops confronted the invaders and the ringleader, Mon-pa A-[m]chog, was killed in the conflict. Bhutanese historical records confirm that there was no further invasion from Tibet for the next thirty-seven years. See also *TNRT* 93b2–94a6; *Druk Dron* 226–27.

A fierce battle ensued and it was not long before the Bhutanese troops recaptured Jakar Dzong under Ngawang Rabten's able command. A number of commanders of the Tibetan troops were taken hostage while the common soldiers fled from the battlefield like a 'heap of beans hit by a stone' (*sran phung la rdo brgyab pa bzhin*). The Bhutanese troops celebrated their victory,[84] attributing it to the power of the protective deities. They subsequently informed the Desi of their success in routing the Tibetans, presenting him with large quantity of armour, weapons and other war materials seized from the invaders. After the hostages had been interrogated, and a thorough investigation had been conducted regarding the attack, the hostages were permitted to return to their

84 Bla-ma Pad-ma tshe-dbang of Nyi-ma lung, Bum-thang, claims that during the armed conflict between Bhutan and Tibet, one group of Tibetan troops is said to have camped at a place then known as Thob-rgyal rDzong – the place now identified as the hillock located on the left side at a distance of one mile from the present Bya-dkar rDzong – while another group camped at a flat plain on the eastern side of south-flowing lCam-mkhar-chu (= ? lCags-mkhar-chu, better orig. Bya-dkar-chu), opposite to dBang-'dus Chos-gling Palace. It is said that while ritual prayers dedicated to the protective deity Mahākāla were being performed at Bya-dkar rDzong, the Bhutanese commander directed gunfire at the enemy camp from the rDzong killing a leading Tibetan commander. The rest of the enemy troops immediately fled helter-skelter from the camp. The Bhutanese troops now attacked the other enemy encampment and were able to destroy it instantly due to the power of the protective deity, so the sources reiterate. The place came to be known as *Bod pa brlag thang* (Bodpa Lagthang), i.e. the plain where the Tibetans were eliminated. That place is still known as Badpalai thang.

It is said that the dead body of the commander was buried at the Thob-rgyal rDzong and the Bhutanese troops celebrated their victory by hoisting banners upon the place of burial. The Bhutanese commander, elated at the victory, was subsequently invited to Bya-dkar rDzong. He and his troops travelled amidst *chibs dral* procession from the Thob-rgyal rDzong towards Bya-dkar rDzong, shouting victory slogans on their way. They were granted numerous presents as well as recognition. A tradition of celebration continued from then on till the time of the 3rd king 'Jigs-med dBang-phyug. In the 5th month of the Bhutanese calendar [i.e. at the time when the monks of Krong-gsar Rab-sde move to their summer residence of sKu-rjes, Bum-thang], when the ritual performance dedicated to the protective deities, as per earlier tradition, was underway at Bya-dkar rDzong, at the same time officials headed by *gzim dpon, dar dpon* and *srung 'khor pa* of Bya-dkar rDzong would visit Thob-rgyal rDzong. There, they would replace the flags which had been raised in the previous year with new ones and have consecratory rituals performed; they would then return to Bya-dkar rDzong amidst *chibs gral* procession. Cf. *Druk Dron* 230–232.

native land, unharmed. Meanwhile, the triumphant Bhutanese troops were stationed in Bumthang itself.

Around the same period, the Dzongpön (district administrator) of Wangdü Phodrang, Gedün Chöphel, was dispatched to the Lingzhi region to command the Bhutanese troops there. It is reported that he was extremely disheartened when his troops proved unable to repel the foe. One day he led a battle at a site called Zangpolog. He lost the battle and many of his men were killed. He was close to being captured, but Jamgön's younger brother Ngawang Phüntshog came to his rescue, taking him into safety. The enemy seized the strategic site known as Masang Drubdey[85] and set up a cairn (*spir lcog*) there. The enemy hailed bullets down on the Bhutanese army, forcing them all to take hasty refuge in the Dzong [i.e. perhaps Lingzhi Dzong].

As the conflict now worsened in the Lingzhi region, Ngawang Rabten was immediately summoned back from Bumthang. His superior leadership during the battle in Bumthang had earned him a great reputation. The Desi expressed his extreme appreciation and gratitude to Ngawang Rabten for bringing peace to the central region, and instructed him to now go to Lingzhi and confront the invaders there. It was hoped that he would be able to do better in the fight than the previous commander. The Desi promised to repay him later as a sign of gratitude, and we find that when Ngawang Rabten returned from Lingzhi the post of State Minister (*nang blon*) was bestowed upon him.

Ngawang Rabten proceeded to Lingzhi to lead the remaining Bhutanese forces of the Gön area. It is recorded that he was a successful commander. Again, our sources almost routinely remind us that any progress on the Bhutanese side was due to a combination of the commander's military skill and the successful mediation and intervention of Bhutan's protective deities headed by Mahākāla. It was this fortunate union that enabled the Bhutanese to expel the invaders. The sources record that

85 This site is located north of Gling-bzhi. Its name is a reminder of the famous Ma-sangs clan, representing one of the mythological forefathers of the Tibetans who settled in Bhutan. Ge-sar, the hero of the epic songs is said to be a son of Ma-sangs, a traditional belief which still lives on in Bhutan.

the Tibetans hastily fled the battlefield and the stragglers surrendered. Taken captive, the enemy soldiers sought protection from the local lama of Gön Obtsho pleading for their life by saying: "Gön Lama, pray be gracious, you must protect us!"[86] They were eventually allowed to return to their land.

After this triumph, Desi Mingyur Tenpa and Ngawang Rabten now became even closer to one another, their relationship almost resembling that of father and son (*thugs yid gcig 'dres pha dang bu lta bu*). Ngawang Rabten harvested rewards and ample recognition from the Desi for his victorious command whereas conversely the hapless Dzongpön Gedün Chöphel was severely reprimanded for his envious behaviour and incompetence during the war. Ngawang Rabten was rewarded with the prestigious post of State Minister in recognition of his service to the government. The Dzongpön felt humiliated and embarrassed on account of both the reprimand and his own infamous battlefield failure: these events sowed the seeds of rivalry between Ngawang Rabten and the mediocre Dzongpön, leading to the first significant crisis for the Obtsho family.

Dzongpön Gedün Chöphel was close to capture or death during the battle at Zangpolog and it was Ngawang Rabten's son Ngawang Phüntshog who had come to his rescue. Yet instead of showing any gratitude, he harboured a deep-rooted grudge against Ngawang Phüntshog's father for this rescue which had resulted in subsequent humiliation and exposure as a failure and a broken reed. Jamgön's biography draws attention to this, commenting aptly that the Dzongpön most unfairly "was repaying a treat of ambrosia by serving poison" (*bdud rtsi'i lan du dug zos pa bzhin*).

The Dzongpön felt deeply offended and provoked by the situation, and it seems that these factors motivated him to arrange assassination of one of Ngawang Rabten's brothers, *drung* Ngawang Drukdra in 1677.

86 *JGNT–II* 47b1: *dGon bla mas yu bu'i srog 'don yod pa zhig sku drin bskyang dgos.*

At that time, the latter was serving as attendant to Dunggyüd Rinpoche Ngawang Jampel Dorje (1631–1681),[87] son of the deceased Zhabdrung Rinpoche. The Dzongpön also made false accusations against the Desi and the Obtsho family in particular.

Jamgön and his entire family were deeply shocked and saddened by this callously executed act. Frustrated with the machinations of worldly life, Jamgön decided to go into retreat at Cheri monastery that same year,[88] at the place where Zhabdrung Rinpoche had been in retreat. In this connection, the biographer presents a beautiful and detailed description of the architectural lay-out and interior decoration of Cheri monastery, and of the surrounding landscape. Jamgön paid his respects to the embalmed remains of Tenpai Nyima (1567–1619),[89] the father of Zhadrung Rinpoche, and to those of Pekar Wangpo and of *khedrub* Lhawang Lodrö (1549/50–1634), as well as to an assemblage of other sacred objects also enshrined in the monastery. In particular, he paid a visit to the Düdul Cave where Zhabdrung Rinpoche himself had entered a strict three-year retreat.[90]

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87 After his divorce from Dam-chos bstan-'dzin, the daughter of lCang-sgang-kha Bla-ma Kun-dga' pad-dkar, Zhabs-drung married a second time, this time a woman called Gos-dkar sGrol-ma (1603–1684), whose family background remains unknown. It was Zhabs-drung's wish to have a son who could succeed him in Bhutan. His wish was realised when his wife gave birth to his son Ngag-dbang 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje in 1631 at Sems-rtogs-kha, who was soon recognized as the incarnation of bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma by lHa-dbang blo-gros. Unfortunately, Ngag-dbang 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje, upon whom his father had placed so much hope, appeared to be a broken reed and quite mediocre. This is evident from the fact that he did not succeed his father. Cf. Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 214–15.

88 The biography situates Byams-mgon's retreat in *me bya* which must be an error for *me sbrul* corresponding to 1677.

89 Zhabs-drung's father bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma died in 1619 in Tibet. His mortal remains were brought from Tibet secretly and cremated in a cave at rTa-mgo where Zhabs-drung had earlier meditated. lCags-ri monastery was built in 1620 to enshrine his late father's relics, and at the same time to serve as the first seat of the Southern 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud School. See Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 157–60.

90 Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che undertook a three-year strict meditation in bDud-'dul Cave to propitiate his *istadevatā* Vajrabhairava which was intended to pacify the groups of gods, demons and men (*lha 'dre mi gsum*) in accordance with the prophecy of the protective deities Mahākāla and Śrī Devī. Thenceforth, the cave became known as "bDud 'dul phug" which means "the Cave of the Subjugation of Demons." Ref. *ZDNT* 84b2–85b6; Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 175–79.



Fig. 17 View of Cheri monastic complex from Dodena. Photo: Yonten Dargye

While Jamgön was there, he received instruction on the Phowa Jatshugma (*'pho ba 'ja' tshug ma*) cycle which stemmed from *tertön* Nyinda Sangye[91] and from one of Tenpai Nyima's disciples, Dorje Chökyi Wangchuk, a great master of yogic channels and vital energy practice (*rtsa rlung thig*) and of the Transference of Consciousness (*'pho ba*). After his retreat in Cheri, Jamgön returned to the capital at Punakha.

Jamgön feared that the theoretical instruction he had received would be of little help if he did not practise properly. He therefore approached Sönam Yözer, the 2nd Je Khenpo, and requested permission to enter retreat training under his guidance. The Je Khenpo gave his consent and Jamgön then began a strict meditation retreat during which he achieved a high degree spiritual practice. The Je Khenpo further granted him the complete set of precepts and pith-instructions of the Drukpa Kagyud

91 The 14th century Dvags-po *grub thob* and *gter ston* Nyi-zla sangs-rgyas, father of Kar-ma gling-pa.

Order – the Combination of Three Main Teachings (*gdams ngag sdong po gsum dril*) which stemmed from Gampopa, Rechungpa and Tsangpa Gyare.[92]

92 The *gdams ngag sdong po gsum drill*, which comprises the following:

1. The Teaching of "Realisation" based upon sGam-po-pa's teaching (*rtogs pa sgam po pa'i lugs*),
2. The "Precepts" according to the system of Ras-chung-pa (*gdams ngag ras chung lugs*) and
3. The Teaching of "Mutual Interdependence" according to gTsang-pa rgya-ras (*rten 'brel kho bo lugs*).

Chapter III

A CRUEL FATE

1. Banishment of His Mother and Siblings

Having successfully repelled its external enemies, Bhutan nevertheless still simmered with many internal conflicts. One major dispute took place in 1680, when the ambitious Dzongpön Gedün Chöphel and his allies attempted to organize a virtual *coup d'état* against their adversary, the Desi Mingyur Tenpa at Punakha. The Dzongpön – no doubt still guided by a deep sense of frustration and resentment concerning past events and the rebuke he had earned from the Desi – now suddenly advanced on Punakha Dzong with his militia in order to oust the Desi from his seat. The Desi, desperately hoping to diffuse the heated atmosphere through wise words and proper counsel, proceeded to the residence of Dunggyüd Rinpoche Ngawang Jampel Dorje. Actively encouraged by the Dzongpön, the crowd outside and in the courtyard of the residence began to loudly rebuke and insult the Desi, even attempting to manhandle him as he approached. Panicking, the Desi ran into the Rangjön Lhakhang and immediately closed the door declaring:

> If you, the people of the southern land, can enjoy peace and happiness, it matters not that I might die tomorrow or the day after. But that you

> should connive at this kind of deceitful and wicked act against me without adequate thought and reflection does not augur well for the survival of the Drukpa State in the future. Therefore it is not at all good. In my case, I am unable to disobey the command of Lama Rinpoche [i.e. Zhabdrung who was still believed to be in retreat] and feel compelled to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to me. With regard to Desi Umze's [i.e. 1st Desi Tenzin Drukgye] secular responsibility for the State, I have no wish whatsoever to retain the secular powers and to conduct the secular affairs of the State; and you all have every right to do whatever you like.[93]

Some people in the crowd responded to this cry of despair, shouting at him:

> You have brought much hardship to the people of Bhutan. Not only have you levied tax and corvée for the building of great fortresses but also forced us to quarry stones to build countless stūpas and *Maṇi*-walls; and you have never let us remain in comfort.[94]

They continued to curse him harshly. The situation had reached stalemate. The Desi's stance at this point very much looked like a capitulation. He realized that there would be no compromise and no appreciation for the way he had governed the country so far. Facing the mounting opposition and the threat to his life if he remained on the seat, he unwillingly yielded to their pressure.[95]

At that point in time, Jamgön's father and younger brother Döndrub had been in the company of Desi Mingyur Tenpa at Punakha. The usurpers now hastily hand-cuffed both father and son, and whisked them away in order to imprison them. That same night Jamgön had a premonitory dream in which he saw his father coming to him in extreme distress saying, "We, father and son, will have no chance to meet in this life;

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93 *JGNT–II* 61a5–b.

94 *JGNT–II* 61b1–2: *khyod kyis lho lung pa'i sems can la sdug sna mang po bcol / rdzong gi khral 'u la gcig pus ma tshad mchod rten brtsigs pa bsnyad pa'i rdo bsko sa slog sogs kyis skyid du ma ster.*

95 The sDe-srid Mi-'gyur brtan-pa resigned from the post of sDe-srid in 1680, following the revolt instigated and headed by *rdzong-dpon* dGe-'dun chos-'phel. He went to lCags-ri where he passed away shortly after at the age of 68. See *LCB–II* 170b4–71b3; *Druk Dron* 229–30.

I pray therefore that we meet in the next life."[96] The dream shook him awake to ponder whether something had happened to his dear father. He was utterly disturbed by the dream. The next day he heard the bad tidings that his father and brother had been taken captive.

Back home at Amorimu, when they heard of the Desi's dethronement and the capture of the father and son, the mother and the only daughter were certain that the lives of both father and son were in great danger. The family feared that they, too, would be in danger and so they decided to hide themselves for the time being. Before leaving their home, the mother swept the rooms clean and then placed a copper pot decorated with *yangdron*[97] and filled with *chang* (barley beer) on the floor as a sign of welcome for any visitors. She also made a fire in the hearth and placed pots of water on the stove – all signalling that they were present in the house. Only then did they leave for the forest to hide themselves.

Though comporting themselves with supreme decorum,
A swarm of bees had been swept away through the ill-fortune of a gusty wind;
Chased away from the flower garden of their own house,
To roam the vast desolate forest.

Samsaric conditions indeed are turbulent,
Changeable [like] the [flickering/flashing] dance of lightning;
Exceedingly unsteady [conditions] like this,
How distressing for the mind to see [such misery]! [98]

Reaching the forest, they now faced the hardship of living there without proper shelter and they remained constantly worried about the fate

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96 *JGNT–II* 61b6–62a1: *nged pha bu gnyis po tshe 'dir 'phrad dbang mi 'dug phyi ma mjal ba'i smon lam zhu.*

97 This is a decoration made from butter sculpted into an elongated, curved triangle. Three of these butter sculptures are placed around the rim of a copper pot or any other container.

98 *JGNT–II* 62b2–3: *des pa'i ngang tshul mchog tu bzang ldan pa'i // bung ba'i khyu zhig rkyen ngan bser bu yis // khyim gyi me tog tshal nas ded byas te // nags khrod mya ngam thang chen de na 'khor // srid pa'i dngos po gyo ba'i tshul // rnam par 'gyur ba glog gi gar // shin tu mi brtan 'di lta bu // mthong ba'i yid las skyo ba ci.*

of their captured family members. Their premonition had not been unfounded: a couple of days later a group of men dispatched by Gedün Chöpel arrived at Amorimu to arrest them, only to find the house empty. They looked for the family everywhere. Not able to find the women themselves, they plotted a strategy for capturing them. They gathered together the village heads and told them that no harm had been caused to either the father or the son, and they assured them that the mother and daughter would be taken to Punakha only to attend an audience with Gedün Chöpel and that they would not be harmed or harassed in any way. The village heads believed them and immediately sought the family's hide-out in the forest. When informed of the promises that had been extended by the Dzongpön's men, the mother believed the story and returned home.

When they arrived back home, however, the story turned out to be different. The mother and daughter were arrested and abruptly brought to Punakha like animals being driven to a slaughter-house, and they were placed under strict detention in a garden close by the Dzong. Nobody was allowed to meet them. Receiving the news a day later, Jamgön looked through the window behind the main congregation hall [of Punakha Dzong]. There he observed how his mother and sister were being detained and what a pathetic state they were in. He found himself helpless and all that he could do was to watch them with tears in his eyes.

The following day, the mother and daughter saw the father and Döndrub being escorted from prison in hand-cuffs. This sight caused them even more anguish, and they felt as if their hearts were being torn into pieces. They started to cry loudly while holding onto one another, rocking back and forth in utter despair. The captors led the father and son along the Phochu side while others led the mother and daughter along the Mochu side at the same time – all of them looking at one other.

The biography describes the sorrow and distress that each felt at that point. In particular the mother and daughter were traumatized, experiencing a sorrow as large as Mt. Meru (*mya ngan gyi khur ri rab*



Fig. 18 View of Wangdü Phodrang Dzong from the South. Photo: Yonten Dargye

las lci ba bab) descended upon them, as it is said, while they staggered, gasping for breath, along the road. The people in the town watched them helplessly and looked at one another with tearful eyes.

Jamgön, too, felt as if he had been hit by "a ball of fire that had struck his naked body" (*sha brjen la me 'dag reg pa ltar*). Anguished, many well-wishers and friends came to console him, expressing pity for him.

Jamgön's father and brother were imprisoned at Wangdü Phodrang Dzong, where they were forced to endure severe hardship in a cell not having even a small opening for light to enter. The sad fate of the mother and daughter was further compounded as they were driven into exile further down the valley – towards Uma, at that time considered a barbarous place where there were only mountains and rocks.[99] They wandered aimlessly downwards following the river, passing through deep ravines and forests. Finally they arrived at Uma. Nothing was available to them there – they had no wealth, no acquaintances, no

99 U-ma, located further down the dBang-'dus valley, is today one of the villages which fall under Dar-dkar rged-'og under dBang-'dus Dist.

relatives – and they somehow survived by selling whatever meagre provisions they had carried with them from home. When they ran out of supplies, they roamed about in search of food, living in caves or under the trees. Finally, they arrived at a place called Wazhongkha. There, they settled down after managing to repair a small, dilapidated house. They made a kitchen [hearth] at the entrance and prepared an altar in a corner room. A saying is quoted to describe their situation: "A king in one's own village and a beggar in other village (*rang yul du rgyal po dang mi yul du sprang po*)."

Life was now miserable for them. The hard life they were living made them look pale and shabby, and the skin on their hands became cracked. Even though the local representative and his servants had affection for them and felt pity, they were unable to help in any significant way for fear of the ruling regime. However, they did help in some ways. A local female spirit (*nagī*; *klu mo*) from their birth-place Amorimu had accompanied them into exile and took up residence behind the altar room, where a new spring started to gush forth.

Back in Punakha, Jamgön was in constant despair thinking about the cruel fate of his father and younger brother Döndrub in the prison at Wangdü Phodrang, and about the destiny and the whereabouts of his exiled mother and sister. While Jamgön was pondering whether or not he could take up contact with his mother, a man called Druk Tenpa, a nephew of *lopön* Chökyi Gyamtsho, who was performing his *tshore* or labour,[100] approached Jamgön and reported that a short while ago a Khampa mendicant had approached him, saying he had been sent by Jamgön's mother. Druk Tenpa requested permission to bring the mendicant into Jamgön's presence. Jamgön became extremely pleased and asked him to invite the mendicant inside. The humble mendicant had long hair, a reddish-brown complexion and bloodshot eyes, and was wearing worn out yellowish-red robes. He prostrated himself to Jamgön and presented him with a ball of cotton (*gru gu*) which he said

100 *m/'tsho res* refers to labour or corvée contribution to local government usually for a short period of time.

Jamgön's mother had asked him to deliver to her son. The mendicant then told Jamgön in some detail about how the family were living in Uma. Pleased to receive news of his family, Jamgön felt as if he had actually visited his mother himself, but at the same time he was saddened at being apart from them. Jamgön asked in which monastery the mendicant lived. Without looking directly at Jamgön [i.e. facing into the shadows], he replied that he lived near where Jamgön's mother and sister lived. Jamgön thereupon served him a good dish. He then sent to his mother through the mendicant a pouch containing some fruits, dried cheese and sacred pills.

The mendicant immediately left and arrived at Uma village. At that time, Jamgön's younger brother who was still just a youth was with the herdsmen. The Khampa mendicant had now assumed a majestic and imposing appearance: still long-haired but now ruddy complexioned and clear-eyed, he was attired in maroon robes. He called out to the young boy and showed him the package, asking "Do you recognize this pouch? Whose son are you?" "I do not recognize it and I am Jam Buthrid's son," the boy replied.

The boy showed him the way to his house. There the mendicant met the mother and handed over the package, adding that he had been sent by her son Jamgön in order to inquire whether all the family members were in good health or not. He then gave the mother detailed news of Jamgön, which pleased her very much. After some time, the mendicant said that he would like to take leave now as he had satisfied himself that all family members were in good health. Still, the mother, Jam Buthrid, begged him to stay overnight as she wanted to make up some presents for him to take to her son. The mendicant replied that he had no time to stay on. She then requested him at least to eat some light food before leaving. While preparing the food, she covertly looked at the mendicant who remained seated, facing into the shadows with his head slightly lowered, and silent. An intelligent and perceptive woman, she now realised that the mendicant was not human as she had thought him to be. She served him food. After pretending to eat a little of it, the mendicant said that he was in a hurry and requested that he be given the

parcels. She packed one bronze spoon and a small ball of cotton yarn and handed them over to him, after which he left.

After covering a short distance, he suddenly disappeared. In actual fact, he was not a human being, but Damchen Gomo,[101] the protective deity of the Obtsho family, who had assumed human form in the guise of a mendicant in order to act as a messenger between Jamgön and his mother and help relieve their sorrow and wretchedness.

2. Assassination of His Father and Meeting with His Mother

Meanwhile, the father was still imprisoned at Wangdü Phodrang Dzong. His captors then hatched a plot to have him killed. After planting a number of assassins outside the jail, they sent another group of men to visit Ngawang Rabten. Acting in a friendly and sympathetic manner as if they wanted to help him, they told Ngawang Rabten that it would be better to try to escape since his life was in danger. Speaking confidentially, they told him they knew of a path by which he could flee. Convinced that his visitors were telling the truth, Ngawang Rabten thought this was his only chance and that if he did not take it he would regret it later. He took his visitors' advice. He was shown a passage leading to freedom; once outside the jail, Ngawang Rabten immediately began to run, but before long his assassins emerged from their hiding places and began to pursue him. He fled towards the Dangchu River,[102] but as his body had been weakened by his prolonged stay in the prison cell, he could not outrun the assassins. They overpowered him when he reached the river bank. Here he was stoned to death.

Fearing the wrath of the powerful Dzongpön, nobody dared to pay a visit to Jamgön to tell him of the brutal murder of his father, and people

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101 This is the protective deity of *grub thob* gTer-khung-pa and his descendants as well as of sPu-ṇa-kha valley, with its main seat now being at rNam-rgyal-rtse in Se'u-la.

102 Dvangs-chu is a small river flowing on the left side of dBang-'dus Pho-brang rDzong, originating from Lu-na-na.

avoided contact with him. He, however, was summoned by Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer who told him:

> It seems your dear father is no longer alive. Yesterday, [in my meditative visualization] he came to me requesting my protection. If this is so, may pity rest upon him! I shall conduct the appropriate rituals for his liberation; and you should make arrangement for the weekly virtuous acts for your deceased father.[103]

Hearing this, Jamgön was greatly traumatized. In a state of extreme saddness, he recollected his late father's gratitude and kindness vividly, and conducted aspiration prayers for him.

The Je Khenpo, too, conducted elaborate rites for the deceased father of Jamgön. A couple of days later, Jamgön had a dream in which he saw that he and his father had arrived at home; his father started to weep profusely, saying that the rest of the family members were not there, whereupon he left, saying that he was going towards the east. It is said that Ngawang Rabten's rebirth later took place in the east, with features unchanged from his previous body.

Ngawang Rabten had been publicly humiliated through imprisonment, and then assassinated. Adding to these ills, the perpetrators sent a letter to the Pönlop at Uma, instructing him to send to Punakha Jamgön's younger brother, *chöje* [Ngawang] Phüntshog and Thinley [his identity remains unconfirmed], who perhaps were with their mother in Uma. When they arrived at Punakha, they were arrested and brought to Wangdü Phodrang with their hands and shoulders tied tightly with iron-chains. They were imprisoned in a local prison called Gyangmarma (Red-walled Prison), an underground vault prison that had thirty-one staircases, and forced to undergo rigorous hardship with strict guards to look after them.

On hearing of her husband Ngawang Rabten's assassination and the subsequent imprisonment of her two sons, Jamgön's mother Jam

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103 *JGNT–II* 67a2–3: *khyod kyi pha de gson pa rang zhig med pa 'dra / mdang nga'i sar skyabs zhu ba yin zer slebs byung / de ltar yin na snying rje bas ngas gnas spor zhig bya yi / khyod rang tshigs kyi yo byed cig gshom.*

Buthrid fainted, and on regaining consciousness she wailed profusely. All through these tragic events, Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye had remained silent, taking no side in the conflict.[104]

Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye at this juncture had assumed the dual post of *gyaltshab* (representative of the Zhabdrung)-cum-4th Desi at Punakha after the revolt of Dzongpön Gedün Chöphel in 1680. One of his first duties was to preside over a mass recitation ceremony, at which a large number of prayers were recited to consecrate newly manufactured talisManic and medicinal "sacred pills" *(ril sgrub)*. The recitation ceremony at Punakha was attended by a large number of monks, including Jamgön.[105] Not long after, Jamgön accompanied Sönam Yözer when the latter paid a visit to Wangdü Phodrang to deliver teachings to those in mountain retreat *(ri khrod pa)* as well as to others.

Jamgön's mother and remaining family members at Uma happened to hear about Jamgön's imminent arrival in Wangdü Phodrang. They had long been yearning to see him. Rejoicing, the exiled family immediately set out for Wangdü to meet Jamgön. Further good news reached them concerning Jamgön's brother, *chöje* Ngawang Phüntshog and Thinley: through the intercession of Gyalse Rinpoche they had now been released from prison.

The meeting brought a sense of relief to the family. Before his departure for Punakha, Jamgön presented to his mother and siblings some of the sacred pills that had been consecrated at the mass recitation ceremony and also other necessities, whereupon they separated. Looking back

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104 It appears that the former neutral and non-commital position held by bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas changed after Ngag-dbang rab-brtan's assassination, since the situation had become increasingly intolerable. His former, non-partisan position – nonwithstanding his personal sympathy towards the assassinated father and towards Jamgön – in the conflict may be explained from the simple circumstance that he might have been afraid of jeopardizing his own position or even life.

bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas, following the wishes expressed by the local *spyi bla* of U-ma, nevertheless allowed the exiled mother and sisters to return to their home and ensured them the rights to their A-mo-ri-mu estate-land. Cf. *TRNT* 184a3–b1.

105 See *TRNT* 158b1–159a6.

from a place where he could see the track leading towards Uma, he followed them with his eyes, noting how his mother and siblings were making their way downwards extremely wearily. His eyes filled with tears as he imagined their hardship, recollecting also the humiliation caused to them earlier when driven into exile.

Like the moon seized by [an eclipsing] Rāhula,
An old wretched mother is oppressed by weariness;
Like a lotus being tossed by a blizzard,
She is tossed and weighed down by a load of sorrow.

How dare I not write like that [when I see her] empty [bodily] form so clearly,
*Exceedingly transparent like the mind's mirror of luminosity and emptiness (*gsal stong*);*
Renunciation [of the world] is motivated by [such] conditions of [worldly] appearance,
Like having understood all phenomena are bereft of [any] truth.[106]

There was little time to mourn: back in Punakha, the master-craftsman *lopön* Tenzin Chöphel, who had been responsible for making Maṇḍala drawings and *tendö* (*rten mdos*) or thread-crosses,[107] now proved unable to continue due to advancing age. Gyalse Rinpoche therefore entrusted Jamgön with the responsibility of making this Maṇḍala drawings and other religious art works, and he soon proved quite expert not only in making thread-crosses, but also in drawing on *shingjang* (*shing byang*) or high-quality wooden boards. Once he made a beautiful drawing and showed it to Gyalse Rinpoche who was most pleased with the result;

106 *JGNT–I* 70b5–6: *ji ltar zla ba sgra gcan gyis zin lta'i // skyo shas mdza' bor thams pa'i ma rgan de // bu yug rlung gis bskyod pa'i pad ma bzhin // mya ngan khur gyis dub pas chas gyur tshe // de tshul ma bris gsal ba'i stongs gzugs ni // gsal stong thugs kyi me long rab dangs par // snang ba'i rkyen gyis slong ba'i nges 'byung ni // chos kun bden med nyid du go byed bzhin.*

107 The basic form of the *tendö* consists of two thin wooden sticks bound together in the shape of a cross. More complex ones can be three dimensional. A complex arrangement of coloured threads is strung around the cross. Originating in the indigenous, pre-Buddhist Bön religion of Tibet, the thread-cross, traditionally woven as a trap for harmful spirits, has been incorporated into Buddhist tradition where a three-dimensional construction of thread-crosses serves as a maṇḍala, or dwelling for a particular tantric deity during performance of a ritual.

the latter also lauded the beauty of Jamgön's calligraphic skills. The biography duly reports Gyalse Rinpoche's great delight in each and every piece of work executed by his now principal protégé.

It was around this time that a certain monk named Tenpa Gyamtsho arrived in Punakha, coming (like countless past immigrants) from Tibet, in this case from the Mantric College of Gyaljed Tshal Monastery in Tsang province. Gyalse Rinpoche admitted the monk into the monk body, knowing that he would be beneficial to both the teachings and sentient beings in Bhutan later. Attending on Jamgön, Tenpa Gyamtsho received full training in the practice of tantric rituals including Maṇḍala drawing, making of thread-crosses, and so forth, and also in meditation, from the visualization or generation stage right through to the completion stage. He gained renown later as the Mantradhāra (accomplished tantric practitioner) Tenpa Gyamtsho, who gained mastery over the Path of Two Stages.[108] Besides him, Jamgön also taught other monks in different fields of ritual practices such as Maṇḍala drawing, ritual prayers, controlling the tone in recitational intonation and ritual chanting. It is said that traces of Jamgön's marvellous work - especially related to Maṇḍala drawing - can still to be seen [at Punakha Dzong as well as in other parts of Bhutan].

As Punakha was the capital and moreover had a special Gönkhang, Gyalse Rinpoche felt that it was necessary to set up a *tendö* there. He again entrusted this task to Jamgön who carried out the work enthusiastically and in a perfect manner. On a certain auspicious day, the *tendö* was duly installed inside the Gönkhang and the consecration ceremony was presided over by Gyalse Rinpoche himself. It is still to be seen even today.[109]

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108 See *TRNT* 246a4–47a6.

109 Since the sanctum at sPu-ṇa-kha is considered the most sacred amongst all, the researchers were not granted permission to take photographs there.

Chapter IV

FORAY INTO UNKNOWN TERRITORY

1. Appointment as Court Priest and Local Pilgrimage before Departure

Jamgön was about to initiate a number of lengthy missions and journeys that would take him to distant places and eventually enhance his standing in Bhutan, all in the service of his country. His first long journey brought him to Eastern Tibet. The full background behind his mission is not entirely clear, but it appears that he was fated to head the first diplomatic mission to Eastern Tibet. It materialized when envoys (*gser yig pa*) who had been dispatched repeatedly from the court of the Derge King Sangye Tenpa arrived in Punakha to entreat the Desi to grant them a capable Drukpa master to serve as one of their new court chaplains (*dbu bla*).[110]

Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye was no doubt the person who planned the renewed foray into foreign diplomacy. Under his regime, Bhutan was enjoying a period of brief, if fragile stability. A concomitant reason,

110 Cf. *TRNT* 99a4–b2.

at least adding impetus to his diplomatic efforts, may also have been that the reputation of Zhabdrung Rinpoche (who was still "alive" and officially in retreat) was very widespread at that time. There can be little doubt that the diplomatic mission was initiated in order to strengthen the already close ecclesiastical bonds which prevailed between the Drukpa and the Sakyapa, whose support for the Zhabdrung was long established.

In the 1680's, Derge was a semi-independent province, a "kingdom" in the Dokham region of eastern Tibet, ruled by a hereditary dynasty, and the present King was the powerful and pious ruler (*sa skyong*) Sangye Tenpa (d.1710),[111] believed to be the reincarnation of the imperial era master Nanam Dorje Düjom.[112] The biography depicts his country

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111 Sangs-rgyas bstan-pa (rg. *ca.* 1675–1710; *ca.* 1639–1710) was, like his entire family lineage, originally no more than *rdzong dpon* of sDe-dge district, nevertheless they were customarily addressed as "King" (*sa skyong*), actually a titulary form of address, indicating a petty ruler; he was in this respect regarded as the 10th King of Derge (his line was an offspring of the imperial-time mGar clan); for the pedigree, see *DGR*. Simultaneously he held the position of 4th abbot of the local lHun-grub-steng monastery traditionally adhering to the Sa-skya order (mKhan-po sKal-bzang tshe-ring, *HGLG, passim*). The establishment of the *rdzong dpon* position as the rulers of Derge owed much to the Sa-skya-pa and their former presence there.

The fascinating and still widely untold history of the sDe-dge ruling house seems to have originated with a local branch lineage of the mGar clan. In the 13th century – as recounted in prevailing histories like the *DGR* – a member of this family clan (himself regarded as the 29th generation from the progenitor, the famous minister mGar), namely *dge slong rdo rje 'dzin pa* sGom-ston bSod-nams rin-chen dpal-bzang-po, had followed in the entourage of 'Phags-pa Bla-ma (1235–1280) as a disciple, serving him as head attendant and as *gsol dpon* or "chief servant." For his loyal service, he was to become the recipient of the position as *stong dpon* or "chiliarch" of mDo-smad district in Khams. He was granted the appropriate diploma (*'ja' sa*), seal with tiger-head button. The position was hereditary and his sons would continue as local chiliarchs. At some point, one line headed by one rNgog Chos kyi rdo-rje became a follower of the rNying-ma-pa tradition, attached to the Kaḥ-thog line. Meeting 7th Kar-ma-pa Chos-grags rgya-mtsho (1454–1506), he sojourned with him for a lengthy period. The latter suggested to him that he settle down in the lCags-ra area, another word for a part of present-day sDe-dge district.

Sangs-rgyas bsTan-pa was son of Klu-'phel with his second consort, and was considered a Maṇifestation of Cog-ro Klu'i rgyal-mtshan, the imperial-time translator. Cf. *DGR* 44–48; *DGLG* 44.

112 It refers to sNa-nam rDo-rje dbang-phyug (976–1060).



Fig. 19 The 4th Desi Tenzin Rabgye (1638–1696) from a wall painting. Photo: Daza

as prosperous, with its population adhering to the teachings of Lord Buddha. The somewhat unbelievable background for the invitation and Jamgön's mission to Derge is reported as follows, a self-serving and glorificatory narrative, the primary concern of which is to highlight the extraordinary importance of Jamgön's mission. Around that time a devastating earthquake visited the Derge area and many houses were reduced to rubble. The King and many of his subjects supposedly were made homeless, and compelled to live out in the open. On consulting the ocular mirror of divination, they perceived that these inauspicious events and the troubles would be warded off, if a lama from the Southern

Drukpa Kagyudpa School were to be invited to their land. Following this, the King twice sent emissaries bearing a large amount of gold as gifts to the court of the Zhabdrung to invite a Drukpa Kagyud lama.[113] Despite their repeated requests, no reply was received from Bhutan and hence the King and the ministers were upset.

The King for the third time dispatched emissaries with a letter requesting to send a lama by any means. At this time, Gyalse Rinpoche judged that the most suitable person to send would be Jamgön, on account of his family background, his personal qualities, his erudition and his experience. He told Jamgön of the letter and what the Derge court had requested, and instructed him to go there. Without hesitation, Jamgön gladly accepted his orders.[114]

Another cause for his joy was that, through the mediation of Gyalse Rinpoche, Jamgön's mother and siblings – still exiled in Uma -- were now finally permitted to return home. They met Jamgön at Punakha before returning to their original home in Gön Amorimu.

Before leaving for Derge, Gyalse Rinpoche instructed Jamgön to go to Jakar Dzong in Bumthang, along with Mipham Ngawang Drukgyal, believed to be the Body-incarnation of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo, to install a *tendö* there. After its completion, the *tendö* was set up in the central tower of Jakar Dzong, being installed on a certain auspicious

113 Jamgön's mission lasted from 1688 to 1695.

114 Suggestive of the highly ornate and allusive biographical style, we may provide the reader with a sample of this literary style by rendering in full how his consent found expression in the biography: "*He voluntarily accepted the behest as commanded [by Tenzin Rabgye], generating an untainted mind of wonder [at the prospect of fulfilling the mission = gladly accepted the commitment] which [to him] resembled the sheer joy felt when a swarm of bees was siphoning the sweet nectar from a fully blossoming lotus flower, [he saw his commitment] to be as evident as the clear disc of full-moon unfolded in the wide expanse of the sky during autumn [resolving that if his mission to Derge] should prove beneficial and prosperous to others [i.e. to the state and people of Bhutan], he would pay no heed to his own hardship [that he might have to undergo in order to fulfil the mission], and he rejoiced at the activity for the Supreme Enlightenment (bodhicārya) [that thus was to be conducted by him, activities] motivated [solely] by compassion.*" *JGNT –II* 73b2–3.



Fig. 20 Jakar Dzong in Bumthang. Photo: Daza

day.[115] Following this, Jamgön and his entourage paid a visit to Jampa Lhakhang, one of the twelve temples built at the behest of King Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century to pin down the supine demoness.[116] There, he paid his respects to the huge and magnificent Buddha Maitreyanātha image as well as to others. He then paid a visit to Könchogsum Lhakhang.[117] Following this he visited Kurje Lhakhang where the great tantric master Guru Padmasambhava had meditated in the 8th century, leaving an imprint of his body on the rock there. Jamgön visited the temple built afterwards to enshrine Padmasambhava's body imprint together with numerous important relics and objects. Just above the cave was a gigantic cypress tree which was believed to have grown out of Padmadsambhava's walking staff.[118] He also visited Zhabjethang, a

115 It is still well-preserved and can be seen even today; See Fig 21.

116 The notion of a demoness (*srin mo*) lying on her back and the ideas of temples built to subdue the outlying areas are directly borrowed from the principal myth concerning Srong-btsan sgam-po's construction of his 12 temples with Jo-khang of lHa-sa in the centre. See P.K. Sørensen and G. Hazod 2005: App. I; Aris 1980: 5f.

117 For the imperial era dKon-mchog-gsum lha-khang (rTsis-lung), see Aris 1979: 33–36.

118 Padmasambhava's visit to Bum-thang, see *rGyal po sind dha ra dza'i rnam thar*. In: Olschak (1979: 182–93. Also see Dargye 2005: 36–51.



Fig. 21 *Tendö* installed by Jamgön at Jakar Dzong in Bumthang. Photo: Daza

sacred site where Padmasambhava had left his foot imprint on many stones.

Jamgön continued further east to Langma[mo]ling [Glang-ma-lung][119] in the Tang valley where there was a temple founded by *ngogtön* Chöku Dorje (rNgog-ston chos-sku rdo-rje, 1036–1102), one of the chief disciples of Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (Mar-pa Chos kyi blo-gros, 1012–

119 Glang-mo-gling was founded by *rngog-ston* Chos-sku rdo-rje (1036–1102) in the 12th century. If the tradition is correct, then it may have been affiliated with the rNgog lineage seat of sPre'u-zhing close to Yar-'brog lake, where the descendants of Chos-sku rdo-rje held the *rNgog* seat until the 15th century. Glang-mo-gling today is a government temple, its custodian being appointed from the Krong-gsar Rab-sde. See Aris 1979:167.



Fig. 22 Langmoling Temple in the upper Tang valley in Bumthang. Photo: Daza



Fig. 23 *Tendö* at Langmoling Temple. Photo: Daza



Fig. 24 Thowa Drak Temple in the upper Tang valley in Bumthang. Photo: Daza

1097), in the earlier part of the 12th century.[120] This temple was especially dedicated to Lhamo Düsol [lHa-mo Dud-gsol = Pelden Lhamo], and Jamgön is said to have received an instruction from the Pönlop in Trongsa to install a *tendö* there. He did so accordingly, then blessed the *tendö*, entrusting the protectress with the task of safeguarding the teachings against adversaries.[121]

Afterwards he paid a visit to Thowa Drak, the sacred site blessed by Padmasambhava where the body imprints of the parents of *drubchen* Melong Dorje (1243–1303/04)[122] can be seen; then visited Rimochen (sTang Ri-mo-can), Mebartsho (Me-'bar-'tsho) and Kurkubi (Ku-ku-sbi), all sites blessed by Padmasambhava. On his way back to the capital, he paid a visit to Chödrak Gönpa, founded by Gyalwa Lorepa Drakpa Wangchuk (1187–1250), a disciple of Tsangpa Gyare and founder of the

120 He was also recorded in the biography as the reincarnation of *rNgog ston* Chos-sku rdo-rje.

121 The *rten mdos* can still be seen today. See Fig. 23.

122 Me-long rdo-rje was an eminent 13th century *siddha* of the rNying-ma lineage and a disciple of 'Khrul-zhig Sangs-rgyas. He was in Bhutan associated with the seats of Bum-phug lha-khang and sBas-phug lha-khang (in sTang rged-'og of Bum-thang).



Fig. 25 Chödrak Gönpa in the Chumey valley in Bumthang. Photo: Yonten Dargye

Medruk (sMad 'Brug School in the 13th century. It is located on the cliff just above the famous monastery of Tharpaling,[123] which was founded in the 14th century by *künkhyen* Longchen Rabjampa (1308–1363), the great philosopher of the Dzogchen tradition. Here Jamgön met *jetsün* Damchö Pekar (1639–1708),[124] who was serving as the Head-Lama of Chödrak at that time.

123 Thar-pa-gling monastery soon prospered and remained an active centre of rNying-ma-pa teachings, especially in the 18th century during the period when the great and influential 'Jigs-med gling-pa (1730–98), the renown rDzogs-chen philosopher, was staying at Thar-pa-gling. Today, it accomodates a *bshad grva* (Buddhist college) for higher Buddhist philosophy, and its head lama is appointed by the Krong-gsar Rab-sde.

124 Dam-chos pad-dkar was born to the aristocratic family of Zhar-chen *chos-rje* in sPa-ro in 1639. He entered the monkhood at the age of 14. Attending on different spiritual masters of his time including the first rJe mKhan-po Pad-dkar 'byung-gnas, he eventually became a most learned master. He headed as the chief *bla-ma* of Chos-brag in Bum-thang. On the request of the Gorkha King (in Nepal), he was appointed as the Bhutanese representative to the court of that king by the 4th Desi Mi-'gyur brtan-pa. He stayed in Nepal for nearly twenty years during which the 'Brug-pa Government was granted several monastic estates and gained a large number of followers in the Kathmandu Valley. After returning from Nepal, he was installed as the 4th rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan (rg. 1697–1707) in 1697. At the age of 69, he retired. For further details, see his biography, *mTshung med dpal ldan bla ma dam pa dam chos pad ma dkar po'i rnam par thar pa Yon tan nor bu'i 'od kyi dkyil 'khor.*

On the way back to Punakha, he visited Jangsa Lhakhang in Khothangkha, the one-time seat of Ngawang Drakpa *alias* Tenpai Gyaltshen (1506–1530).[125] Here from one called Pönlop, Jamgön received the authorization instruction of Yeshe Gönpo, Pelden Lhamo, Tumpo (*gtum po'i rjes gnang*), empowerment of Sampa Lhündrub (*bsam pa lhun grub*), Gönpo Ngödrub Jungwai gyud (*mgon po dngos grub 'byung ba'i rgyud*), and empowerment of Longevity according to the *drubchen* Thangtong Gyalpo (1385–1464) tradition. Returning to Punakha, he resolved to see his family again and seized the opportunity to visit his mother and siblings at his home in Amorimu. There he counselled his mother on the necessity of carrying out religious practices, and in particular he delivered oral transmission on the meditation and recitation of Āvalokiteśvara inclusive of the recitation of *maṇi*-mantra, and also urged observation of the one-day vow of fasting.

In the spring of 1687 or 1688, Jamgön took up an invitation extended by the Paro Pönlop Samten Pekar[126] and joined the entourage of Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer for a visit to Paro, wishing to meet *khedrub chenpo* Pekar Lhündrub,[127] who was residing at Taktshang at that time. Shortly after the entourage's arrival at Rinpung Dzong, Jamgön left for Taktshang Nyinda Marmo [i.e. Taktshang Pelphug]. Even though Pekar Lhündrub was in retreat, upon Jamgön's arrival he temporarily interrupted his retreat to meet him. They exchanged teachings, precepts and reading authorizations.[128]

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125 Ngag-dbang grags-pa was the elder son of Ngag-dbang chos-rgyal (1465–1540) who ruled as the 16th incumbent at Rva-lung. He had been active in western Bhutan, especially in Shar [i.e. dBang-'dus District] where he founded temples including the Kho-thang[-brag] rGyang-gsar Temple. See *LCB–II* 81b2–5; See his biography in *bKa'-brgyud gser 'pheng* Vol. III.

126 bSam-gtan pad-dkar was the 4th dPon-slob of sPa-ro.

127 He became the 3rd rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan (rg. 1697–1707). See note 69 above.

128 From Pad-dkar lhun-grub, Byams-mgon received the following precepts: The "Four scrolls of Mar-pa" (*rje mar pa'i snyan gyi shog dril bzhi*), the *rTsa rlung gra mig 'khor lo* and the *'Pho ba spyi gtol* of Nāropa, the *Phyag chen tshig bsdus* and the *Bar do blo chod* of Maitripa, the Precepts of rNgog-pa Chos kyi rdo-rje, the Visualization Stages of Guru Devotion (*bla ma mos gus khrid kyi dmigs rim byin rlabs kyi snye ma*) by Padma dkar-po, the *Ro snyoms sgang dril* of rGod-tshang-pa, the *rTen 'brel kho bo lugs kyi khrid chos* by Padma dkar-po, the *gSang lam rdo*



Fig. 26 Takshang monastery in Paro valley. Photo: Yonten Dargye

Jamgön visited the various sacred sites at Taktshang where Guru Padmasambhava had left many imprints of his body, feet and hands, and where numerous treasures were said to have been concealed in the 8th century. Finally Jamgön returned to Rinpung Dzong, where his Root-Lama Sönam Yözer was still in residence. Here he gave an account of his plans to go to Derge in Kham and requested him to give his blessing and pray for his safe journey. His Lama cautioned him to undertake the journey making constant prayers to Zhabdrung Rinpoche and to Guru Padmasambhava equally; he also assured that Jamgön would have a safe journey. Jamgön prayed to his Lama:

> Lama Rinpoche! I pray that you continue to live until the end of cyclic existence and work for the benefit of teachings and beings; as for me, I hope that I may be able to return soon after successfully

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rje'i tshig rkang, the *rGyal dbang gsang lam*, and the *gSang spyod zlog sgom gyi khrid yig zil gnon seng ge'i nga ro* by Kun-dga' dpal-'byor and the Vajracchedika, and the Lengthy Aspiration Prayers of gTsang-pa rgya-ras. See *JGNT–II* 77b4–6.

> accomplishing [the mission entrusted upon me] my service to the Drukpa State and find you [my Lama] again in good health.[129]

Later, Jamgön narrated this incident to his biographer, telling him that even though he had made this entreaty three times, his Lama had remained silent, nodding his head and looking at him: it was at that very time that the Lama sensed he would never meet Jamgön again.

Jamgön took leave from his Lama with his eyes filled with tears. After returning from Paro, he made a final visit to his home at Amorimu to bid farewell to his aging mother. Jamgön's mother was pleased to see her son one more time and he stayed at home for five days – a happy time for both mother and son. Upon leaving, his mother escorted him for some distance to see him off. With one hand clinging to Jamgön's robe and the other clutching her hair, she begged him: "Please think of the grey hair on an old woman's head; I harbour one aspiration only and that is that we see each other again." Jamgön promised to return soon.

2. Departure for Derge

Escorted by his younger brothers Ngawang Phüntshog and Ngawang Pekar, Jamgön finally returned to Trashichödzong in Thimphu from his Amorimu home. As farewell presents, Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye gave Jamgön the authorization instruction of the Black Hayagrīva, a gold-plated portrait of Zhabdrung Rinpoche made by the eminent artist *Trülku* Dzing, a *thangka* depicting Mahākāla made from black silk with the figures outlined in gold, and a copy of the *Dogyüd Män-ngag Kündön* of Ngagi Wangchuk.[130] As Bhutan had no diplomatic relations or agreement with Tibet, the mission of Jamgön and his retinue to Kham had to be kept secret. The celebration in connection with Jamgön's formal appointment as a representative to Derge was held at midnight in the presence of Gyalse Rinpoche and some senior monks, and was not

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129 *JGNT–II* 79a3–4.

130 The *mDo rgyud man ngag kun gyi dgongs don* written by Ngag gi dbang-phyug Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan (1517–1554), the son of Ngag-dbang chos-rgyal (1465–1540), throne-holder at Rva-lung.

announced publicly, in order to avoid arousing unnecessary rumours in Tibet concerning the secret mission.

The necessary provisions for the journey were provided by Gyalse Rinpoche. In the presence of an emissary from Kham and senior monks, Gyalse Rinpoche told Jamgön that the King of Derge had sent several letters requesting the government to send a Drukpa lama, and that today he had been appointed as Bhutan's representative, since he was deemed the most suitable candidate taking into consideration his noble family background, his experience and his knowledge in both spiritual and secular matters. Gyalse Rinpoche expressed the hope that Jamgön would serve all the monastic centres, the monks and the patrons of Kham with dedication in order to spread the teachings of the Drukpa School there.

Upon leaving, his travelling company consisted of nine attendants and eighteen horses.[131] They set out from Thimphu very early in the morning – just as the roosters were beginning to crow, so the biographer confides to us – on the astrologically auspicious Twenty-Fifth Day of the Seventh Lunar Month of the Earth-Male-Dragon Year, corresponding to 1688. Jamgön was then forty-two years of age.

Jamgön and his entourage evidently took the route along Cherichu upstream through the Zatola pass. They had to climb up steep mountains before they reached the nomadic area of Lingzhi. Jamgön and his entourage (which included his two brothers, Ngawang Phüntshog and Ngawang Pekar, who had accompanied him thus far to see him off) were here respectfully greeted and welcomed by the local Dzongpön.

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131 Upon leaving, it is recorded that bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas officially returned most of the land and estates (*sa gzhis*) formerly sequestered by the government. Byams-mgon also received as parting instructions, the empowerment related to the cycle of Hayagrīva in the tradition of *gter ston* Zhig-po gling-pa (1524–1583), known as "The Tamer of the Serpent" as well as the authorization of the lHa-mo Dud-sol-ma. *TRNT* 199a4–b2. For Zhig-po gling-pa, a one-time arch foe of the ruling dGe-lugs theocracy in Tibet; cf. *RCP* Sørensen and Hazod (App. II: Chap. 2.8).

The head of Byams-mgon's entourage was the physician (*drung 'tsho ba*) named Bod-phrug (Child of Tibet).

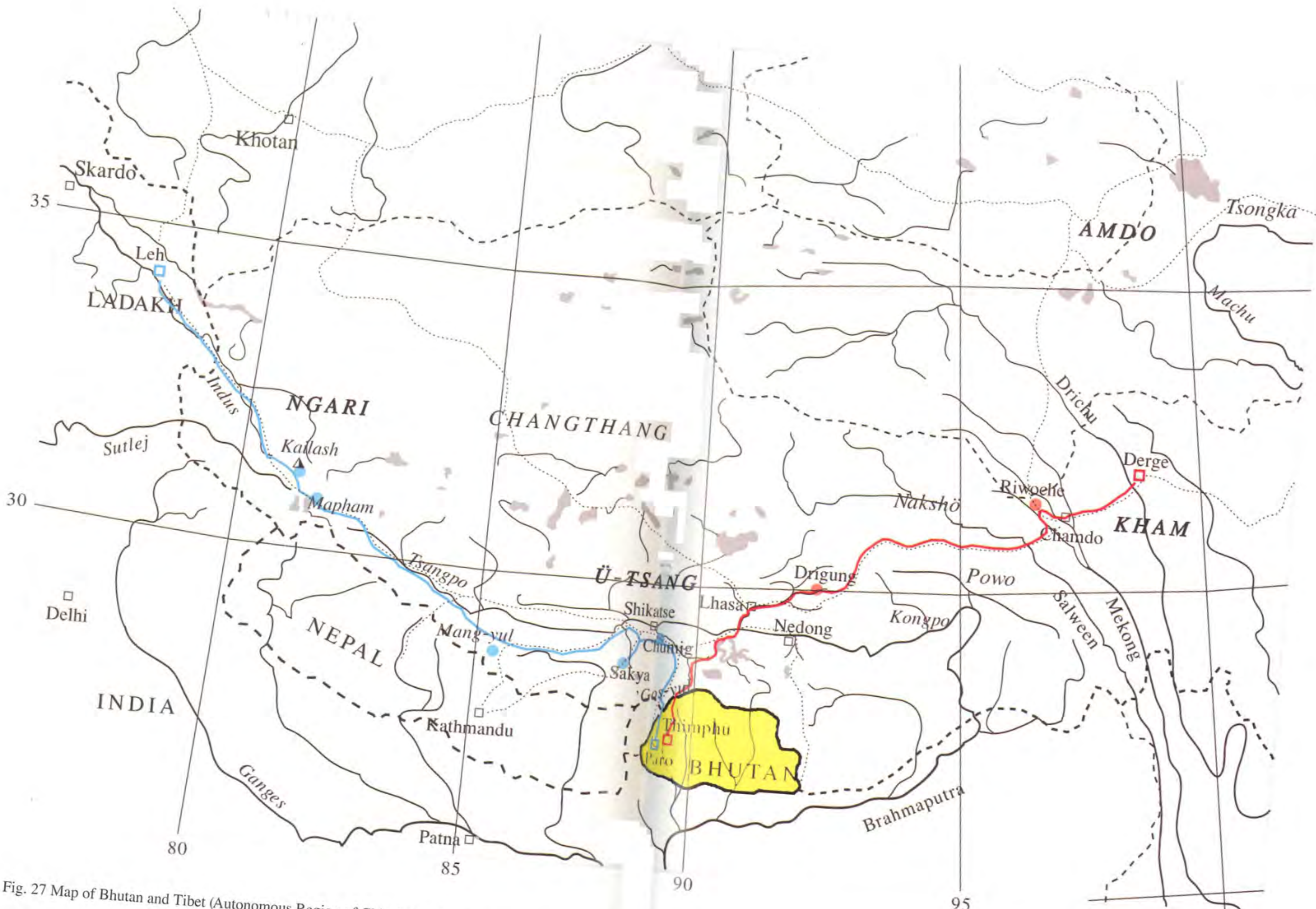


Fig. 27 Map of Bhutan and Tibet (Autonomous Region of China) showing Jamgön's rough travel route to Derge (red line) and Ladakh (blue line). Map : P. K Sorensen

Negotiating rugged paths covered with broken pieces of stone, crossing hills without meadows, Jamgön and his retinue continued their adventure into unknown lands. They arrived at a village called Samthang (Sram-thang), where they secretly halted at the house of a pious householder named Gewa who was a devout follower of the Drukpa Order. Jamgön became seriously sick at his host's house, due to the high altitude and the change of environment. They still had a long journey to make before they would reach their destination, and Jamgön was also worried that the secrecy of their mission might be compromised in the situation in which they now found themselves.

During his rest at Samthang, two men – a father and son from Gönyul – arrived to collect a debt owed by the owner of the house. Jamgön immediately rushed inside on catching sight of the guests, and his host politely asked the two men not to enter as he had a seriously ill patient in his house that day. Although Jamgön gave them 10 *tramkas* [i.e. currency in coin] hoping to dissuade them from entering, they did not accept the money and tried to force their way inside. The host and others in the house were confused and did not know what to do. At that point, Jamgon made prayers to his protective deity. Suddenly the two debt collectors left without making a further move inside the house, saying that they might lose their things which they had hidden on the way. The biography informs us at that point that it was Jamgön's prayers to his protective deity Damchen Gomo and to the Triple Gem that put an end to the impasse.

After his recovery, Jamgön and his entourage took up their journey again. With renewed vigour, they trekked across a vast plain without even the trace of vegetation. A razor-sharp frosty wind blew over the plain carrying fragments of stones and dust particles into their faces, irritating their eyes. They mostly travelled by night when passing through inhabited villages or whenever they felt that they were at risk of being noticed by the local people.

As they moved on, they passed by a vast sandy plain as white as snow, and a beautiful village located in the midst of trees where prosperous

people lived, which they consequently deemed too risky to visit. Further along the way, they arrived at a place called Metog Dangthrog (Me-tog mDangs-'phrog) close to Ralung, the main seat of Drukpa Kagyudpa School, set in the midst of beautiful countryside and encircled by a chain of beautiful mountains, where numerous saints and sages had attained enlightenment. They spotted many attractive and magnificent temples and scattered hermitages decorated with victory banners raised aloft on the rooftops, and Jamgön was now able to glimpse the residential seat of Pöchapa,[132] but although he strongly desired to visit it in person, he dared not do so.

Bypassing Ralung to keep their mission secret, they instead kept on the move, passing by the foot of huge snow-clad mountains where the sacred mountain-site of Norjin Gawa Zangpo (Nor-sbyin [= gNod-sbyin] dGa'-ba bzang-po) was situated and then travelling along the shores of Yamdrok Yumtsho Lake (Ya[r]-'brog gYu-mtsho). They crossed Gampola (Kam-po-la), from where they could see the entire valley of Central Tibet Ü (dBus) spread out below them, with the Tsangpo River flowing through it from west to east.

The entourage did not take the route through Lhasa, but instead passed through Chuwori (Chu-bo-ri) and travelled along the foothills past the monasteries of Sera and Drepung, proceeding towards Taktse of Kyishod (sKyid-shod sTag-rtse).[133] They used a ferry to cross the Tsangpo River and arrived at a village called Yulchung (Yul-chung) where they rested for four days in a house provided by a certain householder named Zangpo. There they were put up in a new house which did not have proper roofing, and consequently at night the rain leaked through the roof, dropping onto Jamgön's bed, which made his stay quite uncomfortable.

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132 The 5th Rva-lung throne-holder Seng-ge Rin-chen *alias* sPos-skya-pa (1258–1313) was the younger brother of rDo-rje gling-pa Seng-ge shes-rab (1236/38–1279/80), both sons of the 4th Rva-lung abbot Nyi-ma seng-ge (1251–1287). He founded a seat at sPos-skya and hence his name sPos-skya-pa. His tenure as abbot at Rva-lung lasted for 23 or 25 years. See his biography (235.1–371.4). Vol. *tsha* in *A Collection of Biographical Materials on the Lives of the Masters of the Rva-lung Tradition.*

133 For [Bye-ri] sTag-rtse *rdzong* of sKyid-shod district; see the details in *RCP* Sørensen and Hazod (V. Table 12.3).

The householder asked Jamgön to conduct an empowerment ritual in his new house. Alhough there was no proper arrangement for holding the ceremony, Jamgön conducted the empowerment of Hayagrīva, whereupon the householder and his family members became even more devoted; they offered him a large amount of meat, butter and parched barley flour as a gesture of their reverence. The householder was a follower of the Drigung Kagyudpa, and he extolled the greatness of Drigung masters. He said that the Drigungpa masters had been receiving offerings daily of around 230 horses, and in any case no fewer than ten horses daily.

The entourage continued on its way, passing below the Drigung monastic seat, yet again daring not to visit, lest members of the group might be detected and thus jeopardize the mission. Futher on, they arrived at Jang Mechung (Byang Me-chung), a nomadic area under the jurisdiction of Kham province. Proceeding further, they passed by a hermitage called Serjachung (gSer Bya-khyung), and arrived at a large monastery called Chamtsa (lCam-rtsa), which had earlier housed Bon tradition adherents but later had been transformed into a monastic institution following the Gelukpa tradition. Though the people at the monastery did not know who the new arrivals were, they provided them with good help.

They encountered great hardship on their journey thereafter, as they slowly ran out of rations. Although a horse was sold to supplement their provisions, it did not fetch a good price. They now were compelled to beg alms of turnips on their way, which they had to eat with only a small amount of parched barley flour and salt.

Eventually, they reached the monastic institution of Taklung (sTag-lung) in Kham Riwoche.[134] They visited the various temples and shrines of the monastery where priceless sacred objects and scriptures were housed, including the images of successive reincarnations of the Taklung Trülkus. In one of the shrine-rooms, Jamgön saw a man-sized

134 For the sTag-lung Ma-thang Khams Ri-bo-che seat and their abbatial succession; see *RCP* Sørensen and Hazod Table V. 11; and Gruschke 2004: 49–54.

image of Pha Ngawang Drakpa (1418–1496)[135] with smiling face and half-closed eyes, which looked very lifelike.

Proceeding further, they arrived at Chamdo (Chab-mdo), seeing here a large monastery with over one thousand monks. The monks provided them with a guide book which included information concerning the seven days' journey towards their destination.

3. Reaching Derge and His Services to Religion

After leaving Chamdo, Jamgön and his entourage now negotiated a pass called Takzila (sTag-gzigs-la), and from this point the lands through which they would pass were under the formal jurisdiction of Derge province. Arriving within their royal host's territory, they were warmly received with tea and *chang* by the attendants of the King who had been waiting there to welcome them. After two more days of travel, they arrived at Rigo (Ri-mgo), evidently a district of Derge Province, where they were warmly received by Dzongpön Döndrub Phel. They rested there for half a month enjoying his warm hospitality. Jamgön bestowed upon him the empowerment of Guru in its Wrathful Aspect.

Setting out again, they travelled to Yen Dzong (Ye-na, or Yen rDzong)[136] where they were warmly welcomed by Dzongpön Tshering Wangchuk and stayed there for ten days, being recipients of his boundless hospitality. The next station on their route was Rabten Gönpa.[137] On the request of patrons and followers at the Gönpa, Jamgön bestowed upon them long-life empowerment. He was honoured with many kinds of offerings in return. Finally,

135 *Thams cad mkhyen pa* Ngag-dbang grags-pa was the 12th throne-holder of the sTag-lung Ya-thang mother seat. See *RCP* Sørensen and Hazod, Table 11.

136 It refers to the site of Ye-na bKra-shis-rtse; cf. *DGR* 17; *DGLG* 46.

137 See *HGLG* 41.

they arrived at Changragön (lCags-ra-dgon),[138] the principal palace of the King of Derge.

Jamgön and his entourage were immediately granted an audience with King Sangye Tenpa, who honoured Jamgön with great respect. Jamgön was requested to sit on a triple-tiered seat with a table in front of it while the king himself took a seat on a thin and lower seat and offered him and his retinue sumptuous tea and other items amidst a grand *zhugdrel* (formal welcoming) ceremony. The King first inquired about Jamgön's health and about his journey, and then introduced himself to Jamgön by speaking about his clan origin and successive descendants who had ruled the kingdom of Derge.

The King confided:

> Although in Tibet there are many Lamas of different sects – Sakyapa, Ngorpa, Kargyud and the Northern Drukpa, we have come to know that Ngawang Namgyal of the Southern Drukpa is a unique holy person benefiting whoever encounters him; he cannot be compared with any other Lamas, and therefore, you [Jamgön] have been invited here. Now, may I request you to stay here as long as I remain alive![139]

At their very first meeting, the King gained unshakable faith in Jamgön, and undertook to serve him and fulfil his every request. Jamgön later related that the King was a prudent, devout and noble man, who never transgressed the confines of his noble demeanour.

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138 The king usually resided in his palace or residence of lCags-ra ("Iron-walled Enclosure") which commonly is listed concomitant with its attached or adjacent monastery (*pho brang khag dang dgon po 'dabs 'brel*), as custom dictated the structures in mDo-khams. The full name of the monastic-*cum*-residential seat was lCags-ra bSam-grub-rtse or bSam-grub mThong-grol chen-po. The original temple allegedly was erected by the nephew of the 'Bri-gung founder, sPos 'Bri-gung gling-pa, *alias* Shes-rab 'byung-gnas (1187–1241). It was subsequently converted into a Sa-skya seat during the local reign of *drung* rDo-rje rgyal-mtshan (*gsol dpon* of *'gro mgon* 'Phags-pa Bla-ma, 1235–1280) whose family line became hereditary rulers of sDe-dge district. It was later expanded into a huge monastic and residential complex during the 17th century. It is located *ca.* five kms outside present-day Derge township.

139 *JGNT–II* 86b4–5.

After a couple of days, Jamgön was invited to visit one of the other royal palaces, called Numda (sNum-mda' = dNgul-mda'),[140] to meet the King's nephew Sönam Phüntshog (d. *ca.* 1714),[141] who also treated Jamgön with high regard and offered him an elevated seat as well as sumptuous foods amidst a *zhugdrel* ceremony. He too inquired about Jamgön's health and his strenuous journey, Zhabdrung Rinpoche's

140 More probably must be altered to dNgul-mda' or "Silver Valley" or even sNyan-mda'; *DGR* 15. It appears that it is the very name of the valley where Derge town presently is situated.

141 The nephew, later succeeding Sangs-rgyas bstan-pa as the 11th King of sDe-dge and as the 5th throne-holder of lHun-grub-steng monastery, was like his predecessors jointly religious abbot-lord and secular ruler (*bla dpon*), following the traditional convention prevalent in Tibet of having a theocratic head of the dual system of secular and ecclesiastic rule. He was son of Sangs-rgyas bstan-pa's older brother, U-rgyan bkra-shis. His principal teachers are listed as mKhan-chen Sangs-rgyas phun-tshogs and bZang-po rgyal-mtshan.

Most famously, perhaps, is the record that in the wake of the assassination of the 6th Dalai Lama Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho in 1706 (he was poisoned on way to the Qing court and buried in Dolon Nor), lHa-bzang Qan attempted to install his own son, Ngag-dbang Ye-shes rgya-mtsho as the successor to the deceased 6th Dalai Lama. When lHa-bzang Qan got wind of the birth of another candidate, born in Li-thang, he dispatched one of his generals, Er-khe-ju to assassinate the candidate, and when the Derge ruler bSod-nams phun-tshogs was informed about this, he too dispatched a contingent of troops from Derge to assist and protect the favourite candidate, the rightful 7th Dalai Lama bsKal-bzang rgya-mtsho (1708–1757) inviting him and his retinue to lHun-grub-steng in around 1714. For this rescue service, bSod-nams phun-tshogs afterwards received from the later 7th Dalai Lama an edict addressed to the people of Derge in general, proclaiming the Hierarch's gratitude to the Derge *bla dpon*; it also granted exemption from taxes. Another verison of this tale recounts that it was lHa-bzang Qan's emissary, *mda' dpon* Nor-bu dngos-grub who in Li-thang traced the birth-house of the rightful candidate and questioned the parents to establish whether the rumour that the new-born son of the house was the rebirth of the deceased 6th Dalai Lama or not; when the parents candidly confirmed that this was indeed the case, the mda' dpon told them bluntly that they could say whatever they wanted, but the decision that their son was not the appropriate candidate had already been taken. Fearing now for the life of their son, they secretly fled to Derge district, where the Derge *rdzong dpon*, i.e. the 12th King (and simultaneously the 6th Abbot of lHun-grub-stengs monastery) bsTan-pa tshe-ring (nephew of King Sangs-rgyas bstan-pa, incidentally) received them with the greatest hospitality.

His immediate royal predecessors, Sangs-rgyas bstan-pa and bSod-nams phun-tshogs had passed away at that point. Cf. *DGLG* 48–50; *HGLG* 30–32. lHun-grub-steng monastery was a Sa-skya site erected by the 1st Derge King Bo-thar bKra-shis seng-ge. For its history, see now *HGLG*.



Fig. 28 Changra monastery in Derge, formal palace of King Sangye Tenpa (rg. ca. 1675–1705). Photo: P.K Sørensen



Fig. 29 The old temple and Gönkhang of Changra. Photo: P.K Sørensen



Fig. 30 Effigy of Genyen Chenpo Jagpa Melen at Changra Monastery. Photo: P.K Sørensen

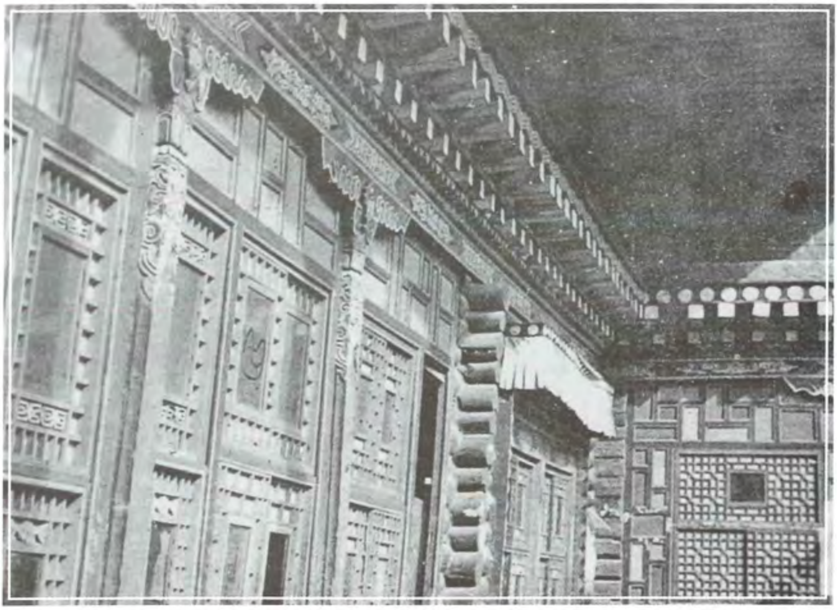


Fig 31 The courtyard of the old Royal Palace of the King of Derge.



Fig 32 The old Royal Palace of the King of Derge at Lhündrubteng.



Fig 33 A sculptural portrait of *drubthob* Thangtong Gyalpo (1385–1464) at Thangyal Lhakhang in Derge. Photo: P.K Sørensen



Fig 34 Wall painting of *drubthob* Thangtong Gyalpo at Thangyal Lhakhang in Derge. Photo: P.K Sørensen



Fig. 35 Ruined housing complex at Changra. Photo: P.K Sørensen



Fig. 36 Taklung Mathang Monastery, the seat of Taklung Trülkus in Kham Riwoche.
Photo: P.K Sørensen

retreat and other news of Bhutan; in particular he inquired to what extent it could be true that one cannot make out whether it is summer or winter season in the Southern Land, i.e. Bhutan, and indeed whether there was any truth in this at all. Jamgön provided him with a proper reply in conformity with his teachings, which apparently satisfied the King's nephew.

Sönam Phüntshog counselled Jamgön and supplied him with some useful advice on how to deal with the local people, and recommended him to communicate directly with the people, in an open and patient manner. He finally offered Jamgön horses, tea and other daily necessities.

Jamgön returned to Changra Palace. Finding the place most suitable, he decided to stay on there for three months, during which period he bestowed upon the King the empowerments of the "Outer Sādhana of Amitayus" and "Guru in his Wrathful Aspect." It was not long before the King insisted on visiting Jamgön daily and making prostrations to him. Honouring Jamgön, the King would politely ask him general questions about the Buddhist teachings but would also ask him about the landscape of the Southern Medicinal Land of Bhutan. Whatever Jamgön said in reply, the King would listen keenly to him with folded hands, taking great delight and having great trust in his words.

Once the King asked Jamgön to explain and describe the structural design of Punakha Dzong. Jamgön gave a detailed description in verse-form in praise of Punakha Dzong and in praise of Zhabdrung Rinpoche, who still was thought to be in strict retreat. In order to test whether or not Jamgön was well-versed in the refined arts of Dances, of [Maṇḍala] Proportions, and of Chants (*gar thig dbyangs gsum)*, and the King also requested Jamgön to conduct the rites related to *gyalpo*-spirits (mischievous spirits, *rgyal mdos*). Jamgön willingly consented and prepared the thread-cross effigy in a perfect manner and performed the appropriate ritual. The King marvelled and rejoiced greatly at his skills. Out of his own interest, the King then learned the art of chanting related to the ritual performance of the "Longevity Sādhana of the Maṇifold

Wrathful Deities" (*tshe sgrub khro bo lha mang*)[142] and the *tsan*-spirit (a warlike, nonhuman spirit) Jagpa Melen.[143] Jamgön pleased the King with religious discourse in accordance with the latter's interests and wishes. He later also recounted to his biographer that the King's voice was both loud and melodious (*gsung che la snyan pa zhig 'dug*).

Accompanied by the King, Jamgön went to Nyobrang Gönpa (Nyob-rang dgon-pa),[144] the seat of the King's predecessors, where they were most cordially received by the *tertön* Jangchub Dorje (*gter ston* Byang-chub rdo-rje)[145] of Kathog Gönpa (Kah-thog dgon-pa) and by many other non-sectarian lamas.

In Kham area, many living Buddhist traditions such as Sakyapa, Ngorpa, Kathokpa, Dechen Chökhorpa, Karmapa and Bönpo co-existed, and usually no individual patron would discriminate or differentiate between the different traditions and denominations: for the patrons, all traditions or sects mostly carried equal weight. When people of noble descent died, the relatives would usually invite lamas and monks of different traditions to perform funeral rites together, in accordance with their individual traditions. The high ranking lamas would each receive two riding horses, while the lower ranking lamas would receive one horse each. The monastic community in general would receive female and male yaks; and those lamas who carried out the rites for the deceased persons by burning the name inscription would each receive a horse in addition to other things. During times of sudden sickness or mishap within the family, one could invite any lama depending on one's faith to bestow empowerment or to conduct a ritual for curing the patient.

142 It may refer to a set of teachings given or performed by Byams-mgon, and later written down by Śākya Rinchen, entitled *Tshe dpag med grub rgyal lugs gsang sgrub khro bo lha mang gi dbang gi mtshams sbyor 'chi med dpal ster;* cf. Vol 4: 235–67 in the 6 Vols. *Collection of 'Brug pa bka' brgyud pa Initiations* (Rewalsar 1985).

143 Jag-pa Me-len is an old protector deity associated with the 'Bri-gung-pa, the Sa-skya-pa and the 'Brug-pa._

144 The correct spelling may be the Nyin-dgon monastery (adhering to the Byang-gter tradition) in dPal-yul (Khams); cf. *dKar mdzes khul dgon sde* Vol. 3: 171–73.

145 Byang-chub rdo-rje was pupil of Klong-gsal snying-po (1625–92).

Upon his return to Changra Palace, Jamgön found that the King himself had made a beautiful *thangka* painting showing Punakha Dzong and its panoramic surroundings, drawing for inspiration upon a poem of praise, describing both the Zhabdrung and Punakha Dzong and environs, which Jamgön had recited to him earlier. The *thangka* was now hanging on the wall above his customary seat. As desired by the King, during his successive stays at the palaces of Changra, Numda, Pelba (sPel-ba) and Meshö (sMan-shod, rMe-shod),[146] Jamgön bestowed upon the King the complete four tantric empowerments. He also granted the King the empowerment and authorization instruction of the tantric deities Saṃvara, Bhairava, the Guru in Wrathful Aspect, Amitayus, Vidarana, the Guru in Peaceful Aspect, and so forth. He frequently explained to the King how the vows of *samaya* (precepts of Vajrayana practice) should be strictly observed.

The King had had great faith in the protective deity Genyen Chenpo Jagpa Melen for many years, and he now requested Jamgön to clarify the purpose of relying upon this particular deity. Jamgön accordingly explained to him in detail the meaning and significance of Genyen Chenpo Jagpa Melen. Following his coherent explanation, the Kings' faith in the deity now strengthened even further, and the King built a temple at the Palace of Changra, in which Jamgön installed a man-sized image of Jagpa Melen, dressed in a coat of mail bedecked with criss-crossed ribbons, and wearing intricately worked precious metal adornments, seated on his horse and surrounded by his retinue.[147] A

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146 rMe-shod formerly was a district under a *gling dpon* or district chief called Du-se. At one point, in the early 1600's, he was defeated by the local sDe-dge monk-ruler (*sa skyong*), Bla-ma Byams-pa phun-tshogs after which the area came under the jurisdiction of the latter.

For these places, commonly designated *rdzong*s which accommodated a royal palace or mansion, see *DGR* 14–16; *HGLG* 26; *DGLG* 46.

147 A statue or effigy (*sku sob*) of the *btsan*-spirit Jag-pa me-len, actually only depicting the head is still found in lCags-ra bSam-'grub lhun-rtse dgon-pa. See Fig. 30. It is locally claimed that it was erected by the local mKhan-chen Ngag-dbang bSam-gtan blo-gros (b. 1868). It is unclear whether the local Derge tradition of this protector deity and the manufacture of this particular statue had been influenced by the spiritual and artistic tradition presented by Byams-mgon during his stay there.

caretaker was appointed to carry out daily ritual service dedicated to the deity.

Accompanied by the King, Jamgön subsequently went to the Palace of Numda and witnessed an annual *torma*-exorcism rite performed according to the Ngor tradition, at which various mask dances were performed. On the full-moon day, he also witnessed the continuous ritual services to honour Hevajra which were performed by monks from different Ngor monasteries. It was said that when all the monks had gathered, there would be over two thousand of them present. Eight hundred monks were permanently living there, far more than at any one single monastic institution of Bhutan, as Jamgön remarked.

On one occasion, the King showed Jamgön all his excellent personal relics including the *kapāla* (skull-cup) of Kadampa Desheg Düpa;[148] a crystal *chörten* relic measuring the length of a hand wherein was enshrined a nail-sized bone-relic of Jowo Atiśa, modelled on a Drepung Chörten; also a club once belonging to Vairocana, measuring more than an arm-length; a *lado* (*bla rdo*) or "soul stone" of his *thukdam* protector deity once belonging to Chögyal Phagpa (1235–1280) measuring two palm-lengths and made of a triangular black stone; and a three-sided ritual dagger (*phurpa*) blessed by *lopön* Huṃkāra made from acacia wood (*seng ldeng*, acacia catechu), and also other items.

Jamgön once met with the *tertön* Nyima Drakpa[149] as he passed by not far from the Palace of Derge. When Jamgön sent one of his attendants to serve tea to the Tertön, the latter told the attendant that he was deeply committed to the Drukpa teachings, and that he had already heard mention of Jamgön. The Tertön also said that on account of his single-minded faith in the Zhabdrung, he wished to present him with many exceptional relics such as a yellow scroll treasure and *pheldung* (multiplying relics)

148 This perhaps alludes to Kaḥ-thog pa Dam-pa bde-gshegs (1122–1192) who founded in 1159 the Kaḥ-thog dgon-pa in Khams.

149 This alludes to the highly prolific 1st lCags-ri Rig-'dzin Nyi-ma grags-pa (1647–1710), whose seat was sTag-mo-sgang sKal-bzang phun-tshogs-gling in Khams. Together with the renowned masters Rig-'dzin Klong-gsal snying-po, Pad-ma rig-'dzin, Nyi-ma grags-pa, he acted as teacher to the king; cf. *HGLG* 29.

of Mahākāruṇikā. For this reason, he had once gone to Trashigang on the pretext of wanting to undertake a pilgrimage to Kuśinagara, but when he arrived at Shar Dzong Trashigang, the Dzongpön questioned him closely, confiscated his belongings and even imprisoned him there. On account of this, he had been unable to reach the capital [to see the Zhabdrung] and hence felt disheartened.

It was during his many travels throughout the kingdom, where he saw many places and many people, that Jamgön once happened to see the Tertön when visiting a village called Kamthog (Kam-thog).[150] Having heard of Jamgön's arrival in the village, the Tertön joyously came to see him. Nyima Drakpa expressed his great respect for the Zhabdrung and asked Jamgön whether he had with him any commentary which had been written by the Zhabdrung. Jamgön replied that the Zhabdrung had indeed authored many commentaries, but that he himself did not have any with him. Still, he was able to present the Tertön with a copy of each of the root-texts entitled: "*Gejor dünpai mönlam* (Aspiration Prayers of Seven Virtuous Practices)[151] and *Gongdü lejang barchod yulgyal.*"[152] Placing these two texts on his head, the Tertön made aspiration prayers and then left, saying that he would return the texts the following day.

Among his many activities, Jamgön also made an image of Padmasambhava. After its completion, Jamgön carried through the insertion of the *zung* scrolls and consecrated it. The biography states that this sacred image is still to be seen in its majestic splendour in Derge, serving there as an object of worship for the local people.[153] Once at a nomadic place known as Gangkha (sGang-kha) where usually there was no water at all, water suddenly gushed forth seemingly from nowhere, flooding the whole area including the place where the tents were pitched and the yaks were herded. All the nomads were surprised

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150 *DGLG* 53.

151 *dGe sbyor bdun pa'i smon lam* by gTsang-pa rgya-ras 1a1–12a6. In: *dKar rnying skyes chen du ma'i phyag rdzogs kyi gdams ngag* (Nya). Part Ca Sha. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang. 1984.

152 *dGongs 'dus las byang bar gcod gyul rgyal.* Cf. Dargye and Sørensen 2001: 13.

153 No trace of this image can be found today in Derge.

and frightened by this sudden mishap; and they requested that Jamgön should visit the area where mishap had taken place. Jamgön did so and blessed the place through his intuitive contemplation, following which the waters instantly subsided. He also advised the nomads on how to avoid natural calamities in the future by propitiating the local *nāga*-spirits.

On one occasion, a monk fled after having stolen some objects from the palace of the King at Changra. The King issued the following command to Jamgön's two Bhutanese attendants, Gomchen Sherab Dargye and Drungtsho Böthrug: "You followers of the Drukpa! I heard that you have a great reputation for magic and power. You must arrest the monk immediately." The two disciples submitted humbly: "If we succeed in arresting the thief, may we pray that Your Majesty set him free without being punished!"

They thought as to what they could do to fulfil the King's command since Jamgön was not present to advise them. And so they prayed to their Lama and to the protective deities Damchen Gomo and Jagpa Melen, entreating them to help them arrest the monk. Through the power of the deities as well as through the blessing of their Lama, within an instant the monk-thief suddenly returned to the Palace, speedily chased by two ravens. When the King's attendants were about to punish the man, a woman told them that Jamgön's two disciples had earlier appealed to the King to set him free without punishment. They attendants informed the King, who set the monk-thief free accordingly. At that time, everyone remarked: "If even his disciples possess such miraculous power, what can be said of the power of their Lama [i.e. Jamgön]!" This incident was reported to Jamgön upon his return, and he remarked that this incident was like a saying: "If one is able to pray to the Lord, that will do even if one is unable to practise Dharma and practise meditation."[154]

On another occasion, Jamgön was invited by Dzongpön Khamukpa (Kha-mug-pa) to visit the Palace of Neushö (sNe'u-shod) to insert *zung*

154 *JGNT–II* 93b5: *rje la gsol ba btab nus na / chos ma nus kyang de kas chog / sgom ma nus kyang de kas chog.*

scrolls in a gilded copper *chörten* and then to consecrate it. He visited Numda Lhakhang,[155] where he saw the sacred image of *drubchen* Thangtong Gyalpo, made and blessed by Drubchen himself and also saw his footprints. He also went to see a one-storey high rock shaped like a black mule, believed to be the riding steed of the protectress Magzor Lhamo (dMag-zor lha-mo), at the foot of the cliff above the village called Ketsho (rKe-tsho). He paid a visit to the pilgrimage site of Senge Namdrak, the sacred site mentioned in the Pema Thangyig (the Biography of Lotus-born – i.e. Guru Rinpoche), in the upper part of a village called Kangdo (rKang-mdo).

After Jamgön's return from this pilgrimage, a lama from Rodam Gönpa (Ro-sdam or Ru-dam dgon-pa)[156] passed away. Before his passing away, the lama had made a will that Jamgön should be invited to preside over his funeral service. Upon receiving the invitation, Jamgön duly went to Rodam Gönpa and performed the funeral rites, and the followers of the lama in return offered him a considerable number of gifts.

On another occasion, he went to Rotang Gönpa (Ro-btang dgon-pa) on the invitation of a Dzogchen master, and was received there with utmost respect amidst a *zhugdrel* ceremony. The master instructed his attendant to serve Jamgön *chang* in his cup. But Jamgön refused to take the beer from the cup of the master, who then jokingly said, "I thought you were an adherent of the Great Vehicle, but it seems that you are adhering to the Small Vehicle (*bla ma theg chen pa yin bsam na theg dman par red*)." Jesting thus, he at the same time felt greatly honoured to have Jamgön as his special guest. They exchanged with each other teachings, including the essence of discourse on the highest summit or apex of the vehicle of Atiyoga. Jamgön received from the master gifts including a bronze cauldron (*khro*).

Proceeding downward from Rotang Gönpa, Jamgön visited a huge rock which resembled a pig in shape and was said to hold a treasure. He

155 This refers to the Thang-rgyal lha-khang situated in present-day Derge town.

156 The rDzogs chen monastery Ru-dam dgon-pa was established under the 10th King Sangs-rgyas bstan-pa, the host of Byams-mgon. Cf. *DGLG* 44–45.

then proceeded to the rural and nomadic areas of Derge. He visited a place called Yilhung (Yid-lhung),[157] believed to be where King Gesar supposedly once had "dropped his mind" (*yid lhung*) (perhaps became depressed?). At the hill called Yagze (g.Yag-ze), two streams were flowing, one bigger and the other smaller, between which there was a pleasant meadow said to be the tent of Shechang Drogmo (Shes-spyang 'brog-mo). Over the smaller stream, there was a bridge said to have been built by Akhu Throtum (A-khu Khro-gtum) which was called Throtum Zampa after its builder, and the valley or province was called Throtum Lungpa (Khro-gtum lung-pa). In the upper part of the valley, there was a *tsan*-spirit called Pholha Gandzod Nyingpo (Pho-lha Gan-mdzod snying-po) said to be the father of King Gesar, which had to be propitiated through the performance of yearly ritual offerings and the hoisting of flags dedicated to it.

At one point, Jamgön had to settle a matter of some controversy. Two seemingly eligible candidates had been found for recognition as the reincarnation of a Karma Kagyud lineage of Chobdrak monastery (lCob-brag), a reincarnation lineage known as Chobdrak Trülku, and the followers of this lineage now requested Jamgön to explain the reasons for this. Jamgön offered them valuable advice and detailed instruction on how to proceed with the selection process. The real incarnation proved to have more faith in Jamgön, and displayed more respect and requested for teachings; Jamgön bestowed upon him long-life empowerment.

This incarnation was under the control and protection of Mongolia (*sog po*), so the young rebirth was enrolled into the monk body of a Gelukpa monastic institution at an early age. Though outwardly a Gelukpa, he remained a Kagyudpa adherent in practice, and in particular followed the teachings of the Drukpa tradition. The young incarnate gained great faith in Jamgön, and when he arrived in the South [i.e. Bhutan] later, he is said to have rendered service to Jamgön.

157 Also called Yid-lhung lHa-ri; see *DGR* 17.

On one occasion, a bronze cauldron large enough to contain tea for a huge assembly of monks was manufactured at the Palace of Numda. Jamgön was requested to provide an inscription for engraving around the rim of the pot. He accordingly composed a stanza beginning "By the generous glory and wealth of Sangye Tenpa of Derge ... (*sde dge sangs rgyas bstan pa'i dpal yon gyis...*)" which was engraved in relief on the pot in lettering the width of a finger. The King was highly pleased at this.

By now, his lengthy stay in Derge had extended to more than seven years and Jamgön was feeling increasingly homesick, and in particular yearning to see his mother again. He therefore dispatched a letter of resignation to the ruler of Bhutan, Gedün Chöphel, the 5th Desi (rg. 1695–1701), along with a beautiful poetic letter addressed to his spiritual adviser Śākya Rabgye.

Chapter V

DIRE STRAITS

1. Return to Bhutan

A Lama like You is not to be found
anywhere even with a Torch lit during daytime
Farewell Words addressed to Jamgön by the Derge Ruler Sangye Tenpa

When the letter of resignation reached the government, Desi Gedün Chöphel summoned to the capital Jamgön's brother Ngawang Pekar, who was then in solitary retreat at Namgyaltse. He instructed him to go to Kham under the pretext of conducting a pilgrimage and deliver a letter giving Jamgön permission to return, should he have fulfilled his mission there. The Desi considered this the best option – dispatch of a special envoy was not thought appropriate, since the prevailing relationship between Bhutan and Tibet was not harmonious.

Jamgön's brother left Bhutan immediately on the pretext of visiting the Jowo Śākya Śākyamuni in the Jokhang of Lhasa and other sacred sites in Tibet in the guise of an ordinary Tibetan monk. He eventually arrived at Ngor Gönpa, where he happened to meet some people from Kham who had come to make offerings. He asked them if they knew Jamgön

and whether they could deliver the letter to him. Feeling confident that he could trust the people, he handed them the letter. Through one Lama Chime Tshewang ('Chi-med tshe-dbang), the letter in due course reached Jamgön while he was residing at the Palace of Changra.

Jamgön reported to the King that he had received a letter from the ruler in Bhutan, instructing him to return home. Unhappy and dejected on hearing this news, the King responded:

> We cannot find a Lama like you even by searching with a torch lit during daytime; now that we have finally found you, how can we possibly let you leave? [We cannot!] You must stay here until I die.[158]

The King argued that he could not countenance being separated from Jamgön and that therefore Jamgön must remain in Derge until the King himself had passed away.

Jamgön spoke again with the King, saying that to prolong his stay would go against the command of his country's ruler, and that it would be improper for him to disobey the command. He further argued that his old mother would not live for much longer and that the state of her health worried him a lot. He therefore pleaded most emphatically with the King to be permitted to take leave. The King attempted to remain adamant, but seeing the strength of Jamgön's determination, he then replied:

> Had you been some other Lama, I would have the right to stop you from leaving, but since you and I are bound by sacred commitments, I cannot bear going against your request.[159]

The King finally gave his consent. The King's brother Sönam Phüntshog subsequently attempted to persuade Jamgön to stay back, but in vain.

158 *JGNT–II* 97b1–2: *khyed lta bu'i bla ma nyin par sgron mes btsal yang mi rnyed na / rnyed pa'i dus 'dir 'bral du ga la 'phos te / kho bo'i tshe ji srid par bzhugs dgos.*

159 *Ibid.* 97b3. *bla ma gzhan zhig yin na sgor yang chog ste rin po che khyed dang mtha' dam tshig gis 'brel bas / bka' bcag thes mi 'dug.*

Previously, Jamgön had not considered bestowing the empowerment of the many-deity Mahākāla upon the King, even though the latter had on several occasions requested him to do so. This time, upon a renewed request, he agreed to bestow the empowerment, and conferred upon the King the four complete empowerments of Mahākāla as well as detailed explanations of tantric commitments (*vajrasamaya*), including the common and specific commitments. Jamgön then went to Nyobrang Gönpa where he donated rich presents to the seat and gave religious counsel to his followers and patrons alike. He remained there for some time and since he apparently had been serving as a sort of lama of the temple, he finally handed over the charge of the temple properties to his successor. The King also came to the temple to make offerings, and afterwards visited Jamgön there.

After returning to Changra Palace, the King invited Jamgön, who was still at Nyobrang Gönpa, to join him there. At a farewell ceremony, the King formally presented Jamgön with many valuable gifts including riding horses and pack mules, tea, high-quality woollen cloth, gold, silver, and rolls of silk brocade, as well as Chinese pots and so forth. He entreated Jamgön most graciously to look upon him in successive lifetimes. Önpo Rinpoche, too, (the King's "Precious Nephew") showered him with many gifts including horses, tea and so on. On the request of another royal nephew, Önpo Sönam Phüntshog, Jamgön bestowed upon him the empowerment of Saṃvara, and the former offered various gifts including two horses, tea, and gold. Other members of the royal family, ministers of state, and also the King's subjects offered Jamgön many gifts, in accordance with their means and whatever they could afford to give. Before Jamgön's departure, the King sent to him, through one of his attendants, five measures of gold (*srang lnga*),[160] requesting in return a sacred ritual dagger that Jamgön had worn strapped at his waist, as a mark of blessing and as a remembrance.

With his mission deemed a success, Jamgön – at the age of forty-nine in the Wood-Female-Pig Year, corresponding to 1695 – finally set forth

160 Approximately four kilograms by weight.

on his journey back to his homeland. As Bhutan and Tibet, even at that time, entertained no proper diplomatic relationship (*gtan 'chings med*), the journey back to Bhutan would be by no means easy; fearing that the Tibetans might come to know of his presence, he dressed himself as an ordinary Tibetan, and then decided to make the return journey following the routes that passed through Rongpo and Dam which he had used when travelling up from Bhutan.

Custom taxes were usually required to be paid at Nagchula, the pass which crossed through the Nagchu nomadic area, and this was where tea taxes also were usually collected. Intending to visit Jowo Śākyamuni, Jamgön seized the opportunity to join some Ngorpa monks of Sakya to pay tea tax there. When the first view of Lhaden Tsuglagkhang (i.e. the Jokhang in Lhasa) came within his sight on the journey, instantly stirred by faith, he made prostrations towards it. Arriving finally at Lhaden Tsuglagkhang, he halted for four nights at the house of one caretaker of wood (*shing gnyer*), and then for one night at a small hamlet, and during this time he paid a visit to each and every shrine of Lhaden Tsuglagkhang, including the sacred shrine-room of Jowo Rinpoche.

Jamgön then continued on his journey until he reached Tshurphu of Tölung (sTod-lung) where resided the 11th Zhanag Karmapa Yeshe Dorje (Ye-shes rdo-rje; 1675–1702), who was renowned in the three realms. Desiring to see the Karmapa, he paid a visit to him.

On meeting with the Karmapa, Jamgön experienced a sense of immeasurable happiness as well as one of sadness. He offered him five measures of gold, and respectfully made prostration to his feet. Looking at Jamgön with smiling face and benevolent eyes, the Karmapa blessed him by placing his hand on Jamgön's head. Jamgön requested Karmapa for a spiritual connection (*chos 'brel*) and the Karmapa bestowed upon him the meditation manual of Āvalokiteśvara. Karmapa inquired whether Jamgön was a diligent Dharma practitioner, and asked where he came from. However, fearing that other devotees who were present might come to know about him, Jamgön dared not make a truthful response and instead replied:

> It is uncertain for me, a beggar, as to where I come from, where I go and where I stay. Only you omniscient Lama Rinpoche [i.e. Karmapa] probably would know from where I truly come![161]

The Karmapa smiled at him and remained silent.

Although Jamgön was asked to stay on for a few days, he was able to remain one night only as he was worried about his long journey back to Bhutan. He received sacred pills called Karma Rilnag Thum (*karma ril nag thum*), protecting-threads, and a fragment of cloth from the garment of the Karmapa. The biographer avers that he himself had later seen how Jamgön constantly wore the blessing pills around his neck, and kept the thread and the piece of cloth rolled up in a small pouch, and that he would often make profuse praise to the Karmapa, with hands folded.

Jamgön now continued his journey via Yangpachen (Yangs-pa-can), over the Nyenchen Thanglha (gNyan-chen thang-la) mountain chain and on reaching Zhikatse (gZhis-kha-rtse) he again paid tea tax. Passing through the villages of Lhetö (lHas-stod = La-stod), Sam[-thang] and then others, he finally arrived at Lingzhi Yulgyal Dzong (Gling-bzhi gYul-rgyal rDzong), located within Bhutanese territory. Here he was given a warm welcome. He continued his journey down from the mountains, finally reaching Trashichödzong.

2. A Local Dispute and the Banishment of Mother and Siblings

Jamgön arrived back in Bhutan in 1695, having fulfilled his mission to Kham Derge. At Trashichözong, the monk community including his great spiritual friend, Śākya Rabgye accorded Jamgön a warm and ceremonial welcome including a banquet. He paid a visit to Pekar Lhündrub (Pad-dkar lhun-grub), the 3rd Je Khenpo of Bhutan (rg. 1689–1697), who had been on the throne for almost six years now.

161 *JGNT–II* 103a3–4.



Fig. 37 Tango Monastery in the upper valley of Thimphu. Photo: Yonten Dargye

Jamgön presented the numerous gifts that he had brought along from Derge to the government in the presence of the Desi Gedün Chöphel. These included gold, silver, tea, clothing, silk and horses. He offered different precious items, such as gold, silver, clothing and blocks of tea to Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye (who by then had retired and was residing at Tango) and to the entire monk community, and he gave one square length of silk to each and every monk.

Many things in Bhutan had changed during Jamgön's seven years of absence. The Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer, his Root-Lama, had already passed away one year after he had left, and in 1694 Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye had retired from the post of Desi at the age of 57 due to bad health, and gone into retreat at Tango. *Lopön* Sangngag Lingpa also had passed away. *Gelong* Drakpa Gyamtsho and some other spiritual friends had gone to different places for solitary retreat. In 1697, within two years of Jamgön's return, the 3rd Je Khenpo retired and left for

Pümo Dechen Chökhor for meditation.[162]

These sweeping changes strongly motivated Jamgön, who was yearning more and more for a religious, secluded life, to seek to resign from secular responsibilities. However, when he made a formal application to the government for permission to resign from the secular burdens on the grounds that he wished to go into retreat, his request was met with a refusal.

Sometime after his return from Kham, Jamgön paid visits to a number of people including his family members. He went to see Gyalse Rinpoche at Tango. Later he visited his home at Amorimu. His old mother had long been yearning to see her son, and was so overjoyed that she felt as if her 'heart, after being tormented by unremitting heat, was now bathed in cooling sandalwood perfume' (*tsha bas gdungs pa'i snying la tsan dan gyi byugs pa lhung bar ltar*). He presented to his mother a red cape while to other family members and devotees he gave sacred pills and protecting-thread.

In 1697, Jamgön visited *jetsün* Damchö Pekar, newly installed as the 4th Je Khenpo [rg. 1697–1707], and on that occasion received a large number of teachings from him.[163] As the *götor* which was being erected at Punakha Gönkhang before he left for Kham was still unfinished, Jamgön now worked on the remaining part and completed it before long.

At the invitation of Thinley Lhündrub, the Chila (*spy bla*) or Provincial Monk Governor of Paro, Jamgön visited Rinpung Dzong in Paro in the company of the Je Khenpo and the monk body, to take part in the religious service being held there. At that time, they also visited the

162 This site, earlier known as sPus-mo Brag-dkar, today is known as Thugs-rje-brag. It is located on a mountain slope above the Thim-phu valley. Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po meditated for a month at this place during which he is said to have received teachings from Avalokiteśvara, the lord of compassion. See Yonten Dargye and P.K. Sørensen 2000.

163 For details of the numerous teachings, cycles and instructions, see *JGNT–II*, 106a1–b2.



Fig. 38 Modern sculptural figure of Tenzin Rabgye kept at Punakha Dzong.

sacred site of Taktshang. Here Mipham Ngawang Drukgyal, the Body-incarnation of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo together with the Je Khenpo and senior monks performed the "Grand Accomplishment" ceremony (*sgrub chen*) of the Gongdü (*dGongs 'dus*) cycle of treasure teachings in connection with the manufacture of so-called "Gongdü Pills" (*dgongs 'dus ril sgrub*), throughout many days, during which many signs of spiritual accomplishment are recorded to have appeared in and around the Taktshang shrine. They returned to Rinpung Dzong and then to Punakha, the winter seat of the great monk community.

Desi Gedün Chöphel was known to be fierce and arrogant by nature and usually he would blame and punish any person for even the slightest transgression. Earlier, when he harboured a personal grudge against Jamgön's father whom he considered a personal enemy, he had him taken captive, severely punished and beaten, and then in the end assassinated. On New Year's Day of the Iron-Dragon Year, corresponding to 1700,[164] a girl at Amorimu was married off to a

164 Although the present conflict at A-mo-ri-mu unfolded in 1700, the controversy had a long and grim pre-history. In 1695, bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas stepped down, not least as a consequence of the feud with the uncompromising sDe-srid. Ardussi has already addressed the conflict in some detail. dGe-'dun chos-'phel, possibly as a hoax or weary of incessant skirmishes, had already in 1688 requested permission to retire from his post as rDzong-dpö*n* of sPu-ṇa-kha (a position he had held since 1670) and to settle down at Se'u-la. rGyal-sras bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas, at that point the presiding sDe-srid, consented only on condition that dGe-'dun chos-'phel would agree to retire to dBang-'dus Pho-brang rDzong, in order to keep him at a fair distance from his long-term foes, the A-mo-ri-mu people.

dGe-'dun chos-'phel, who was a hot-tempered and argumentative man, continued to involve himself in politics. The reason was that he – ever-ambitious – had grown increasingly jealous of a former attendant of his, *drung* Nor-bu who in 1694 had risen to become the prestigious chamberlain of the mortal remains of the Zhabs-drung as well as holding the position of Thim-phu r*Dzong-dpön*. With the assassination of the latter, dGe-'dun chos-'phel now reappeared on the political scene and led a faction that indirectly demanded bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas resign as sDe-srid, and remain active only in a spiritual capacity. bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas who, as is well-known, was already suffering from failing eyesight and other illnesses, decided to retire altogether, and dGe-'dun chos-'phel, seizing the opportunity to resume power, soon after arranged his own appointment as the new sDe-srid. The scene thus was set for the further conflicts. See *TRNT* 325b6ff.; *Druk Dron* 267–69. cf. also Ardussi 2000: 12–13.

boy. Later on a dispute arose between the two sets of parents of the couple, due perhaps to a breach in the marriage commitment, and the case landed in court at Punakha. Although Jamgön's younger brother Ngawang Phüntshog was not involved in the dispute, the Desi played foul, and implicated and imprisoned him. The people of the village gathered to discuss the charges, arguing that if the Amorimu village and people remained indifferent to the Desi's contemptible act, then a risk existed that this policy of arbitrary acts would harm the law of the land in the future. They resolved to seek proper justice and acquittal. They submitted a petition to the Desi, arguing that Ngawang Phüntshog should not to be charged in the marriage conflict. However, despite this petition he was not released. Matters turned from bad to worse when Ngawang Phüntshog's son Druk Dargye ('Brug Dar-rgyas) was taken captive too, and in his case an acquittal similarly refused.

An internal feud involving old antagonists now broke out into full light over this controversy. Jamgön's other brother, Lama Tenzin panicked at the thought that without the now deceased Tenzin Rabgye (d. 1698), the Amorimu people would be exposed to the machinations of Gedün Chöphel, who previously had inflicted punishment upon them, even though they had been without fault. Fearing retaliation by the unpredictable Gedün Chöpel, they resolved to flee the place before armed conflict broke out. Lama Tenzin debated the situation with his nephew Druk Dargye in Punakha, and they soon resolved to flee to his village at Amorimu in all haste. After reaching the place, they remained restless and worried, fearing that their armed foes might follow them. After a couple of days, they heard that many people had been killed at the capital in the ensuing fight. It was reported that the outer and inner courtyards of Punakha Dzong were filled with blood. Shortly after, some of the Desi's men arrived at Amorimu and drove mother and son out of their house. All their property was strewn about like a 'pile of ashes being blown away by wind' (*thal phung rlung gis khyer ba bzhin*), and the house set on fire so that nothing was left. The entire scene looked like 'a dismantled bee hive' (*grong tshang = sbrang tshang zhig pa ltar*).

All members of Jamgön's family, including even his mother were brought to Punakha as captives. Lama Tenzin and his nephew were dragged away from the family and imprisoned. Other family members including Jamgön's mother were confined under tight security and then exiled. Hearing of these developments, Jamgön became deeply depressed. He felt that he was unable to do anything to change the situation.

Once again exiled, Jamgön's mother and younger brother were this time sent further towards the south in Dagana region. They slowly made their way through rugged terrain with fearsome forest and dreadful ravines and gorges. Deprived of their home and personal belongings, their situation now resembled that reflected in the saying 'regarding the fake master or proprietor now as master, the real master is expelled like a dog' (*mi bdag bdag ru re / bdag po sgo khyir 'don*), meaning that righteousness and lawfulness do not always survive in the face of brutal injustice. When, in due course, the Chila of Dakar, Pönlop Kachupa [i.e. Rigzin Lhündrub; *dPon-slob bKa'-bcu-pa Rig-'dzin lhun-grub*?] met the exiled family, he commented on their situation as follows: "There is none more pitiable than the family of Gön Lama! How is it possible that such a cruel act has been meted out to the family of the Depa Umze's nephew!"

Pönlop Kachupa treated the family with respect and affection. Although unable to offer any major assistance due to fear of higher authority in the capital, he most graciously provided covert help through the continuous supply of basic necessities for the maintenance of daily sustenance.

Back in Punakha, some people sent by Gedün Chöpel entered the prison cell where Lama Tenzin and his nephew were confined. As in the former case with Jamgön's father, they now pretended to be friendly to the captives, and persuaded them to attempt to flee the prison. Seeing this as a way out of their predicament, Lama Tenzin and his nephew subsequently attempted to escape, but some assassins who were waiting outside caught hold of them and hacked them to death. Hearing the news, Jamgön surprisingly did not show even a trace of

anger or indignation, even though his father, too, had been assassinated in the same way. However much mental distress he must have felt, his outward indifference – if this really was the case – may also have reflected uncommon faith in the law of *karma* rather than that (as might be expected) fearful now for his own life, he dared not speak out against the overwhelming opponent that he and his family was facing. A different explanation for this description of Jamgön's reaction to the tragedy and the fate of his family may rest with the biographer. Śākya Rinchen may indeed have withheld any description of an outburst of the anger or even despair that Jamgön might (or indeed must) have felt. Such a depiction of Jamgön's feelings, would in the final analysis, be deemed inappropriate to include in an idealized biography of this nature.

3. Sojourn at Khodang Dölung and Return Home of Mother and Siblings

Once again, Jamgön was assigned a new responsibility. The government appointed him as the Head of the Meditation Seat (*sgrub sde*) of Dölung (rDo [=sDod]-lung) in Khodang [= Kho-thang-kha],[165] the seat where his Root-Lama Sönam Yözer had resided for a long time and which had been blessed by the presence of many other earlier spiritual personalities. The meditation seat was very well located for its purpose, being devoid of worldly distractions and having all the requisite qualities for meditation practice. Jamgön followed a strict ascetic life, in his practice strictly following the seven-fold body posture of Vairocana (*rnam snang chos bdun*)[166] with mindfulness (*dran pa*), alertness (*bag yod*) and continuous

165 rDo [= sDod?]-lung dgon-pa is said to have been initially founded by Ngag-gi dbang-phyug (great grand-father of Zhabs-drung] in the 15th as a retreat site. It was used as meditation seat over the years. See *JGNT–II* 57a4–5; bSod-nams 'od-zer, before he became the rJe mKhan-po, headed this meditation centre. Today the local *bla-ma* or head is appointed by the central monastic body.

166 The seven physical disciplines or postures (*lus rnam snang chos bdun*) to be maintained during a formal meditation in Buddhist practice are as follows:

1. sitting crossed-legged (*rkang pa dkyil krung*)
2. hands in the gesture of equipoise – the right hand lying palm upward on the upturned left hand (*lag pa mnyam bzhag*)
3. a straight back (*sgal tshig drang po bsrang ba*)

awareness (*shes bzhin*), not relaxing his concentration for even a moment, which led him to a higher level of realization than his earlier practice. Some who did not understand the essence of Dharma practice observed how Jamgön remained secluded in strict meditation, not interacting with the patrons and the common people. They approached him and said to him that he should be more caring and polite towards his patrons who provided support for the management of the Gönpa which would increase both the number of his devotees and of the activities. However, Jamgön replied:

> Mixing spiritual activity with worldly pretentious acts in this way only looks good in the eyes of worldly people; such an approach, mixing these objectives was never pursued by the former precious masters of the Kagyud lineage. As for me, I will not perform any act that was not part of my Root-Lama Sönam Yözer's activity. I do not know anything beyond what my Lama did; even if I did know of other activities, I would not carry them out. If the above activity was part of my Lama's activities, then I would definitely carry it out, even if I had no previous knowledge of it, simply by learning how to do it.[167]

As Dölung Gönpa was situated at a high altitude, in winter it was cold to stay there. For this reason, Jamgön spent the winters down at Chunglung (Khyung-lung),[168] where he used Chunglung Gönpa as his winter residence. At each of these Gönpas – Dölung and Chunglung – he pursued meditation. When the former chief Lama of Chunglung named *chöje* Druk Pelzang (*chos rje* 'Brug dpal bzang) had passed away earlier, many of the religious artefacts of the Gönpa had been lost. Jamgön now replaced the lost artefacts with new ones.

During the closing ceremony held at the end of any three-year retreat

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4. neck bent slightly forward (*mgrin pa cung zad gug pa*)
5. shoulders straight like a yoke (*dpung pa gshol ltar brkyangs pa*)
6. eyes fixed on the tip of the nose (*mig sna rtser phab pa*)
7. tongue touching the upper palate (*lce rtse ya rkan la sbyar ba*).

167 *JGNT–II* 115b4–5.

168 Khyung-lung dGon-pa is located on the hilltop, about one hour trek from Chu-'dzoms-sa in dBang-'dus District. It is connected by motorable road and functions as a monks' school (*bslob grva*) under the dBang-'dus Rab-sde.

session, it was customary for the retreatants to provide many offerings to both the head lama and also to all others resident at the Gönpa. Thinking that the custom would discourage those who had a serious interest in going into retreat, Jamgön banned this costly system of making offerings. As a result, the number of people genuinely wanting to pursue meditation increased dramatically. He similarly ruled that patrons of the Gönpas should not make large and ostentatious food offerings as this brewed competitiveness amongst patrons vying for prestige and fame. He permitted only the supply of a meagre amount of food provisions just enough to sustain the livelihood of those residing at the Gönpas.

Upon the request of the patrons and other devout followers, Jamgön introduced annual Maṇi Drubchen (*Ma ṇi sgrub chen*) sessions at Chunglung Gönpa. As a gesture of respect for him, the devout patrons offered him some lands. He in turn donated these lands to the Gönpa as religious estates (*mchod / chos gzhis*), the cultivation of which would provide revenue and endowment for sponsoring the annual Maṇi Drubchen rites.

A hermit named Marzhongpa (Mar-gzhong-pa) who had over many years remained in mountain retreat and who had gained sufficient meditative practice once came to see Jamgön. With skilful questioning, Jamgön tested the hermit's knowledge. The hermit proved to have gained good experience in *śamatha* (breathing meditation) practice, but still had not comprehended the nature of mind and therefore had not realized the true nature of mind itself. On the contrary, the hermit was overconfident, thinking that his mind already rested in the sphere of the 'Great One-tastedness' of mind (*gnas cha la ro gcig chen po yin*). Jamgön, however, corrected his errors by imparting to him dharma talk, and introduced him to the unconstructed natural state of mind, by differentiating experience and realization. As a result, the hermit developed a deep respect for Jamgön.

Once, a dumb boy was brought by his father to receive blessing from Jamgön, who gave the boy sacred "vase-water" blessing (*bum chu*). On



Fig. 39 Dölung Gönpa in Sha Khotokha. Photo: Sonam Tobgay



Fig. 40 Closer view of Dölung Gönpa. Photo: Sonam Tobgay



Fig. 41 Palden Drepung Chorten painted by Jamgön, now preserved at Dölung Gönpa. Photo: Sonam Tobgay



Fig. 42 A sacred stone with handle 'Dölung' kept at Dölung Gönpa from which its name derived. Photo: Sonam Tobgay



Fig. 43 The image of Jowo Jampa (Maitreya Buddha) at Dölung Gönpa. Photo: Sonam Tobgay



Fig. 44 Chortens preserved at Dölung Gönpa. Photo: Sonam Tobgay



Fig. 45 Jangsa Lhakhang in Sha Khothakha. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 46 Gilt copper portrait of *yongzin* Ngagi Wangchuk (1617–1554) kept at Jangsa Lhakhang. Photo: Yonten Dargye

drinking the water, the boy instantly cried out: "A-pha Lama." When he had grown up, this boy became a skilled practitioner of the traditional arts and crafts (*bzo rig*). On another occasion, Jamgön consecrated a *thangka* painting of the Fierce Kīlaya (*drag po kīlaya*). It was said that when the owner's house caught fire at a later date, the *thangka* was retrieved completely undamaged.

At Dölung Gönpa, Jamgön erected a two-storeyed Jangchub Chörten with proportions of his own design. Many sacred relics, including Dharmakāya relics (*chos sku'i ring bsrel*), mantric palm imprints as well as an image of Maitreya, likewise manufactured by Jamgön himself, were all inserted as its consecratory dhāranī fillings. Upon its completion, Jamgön himself conducted the consecration ceremony. It is also recorded that he created a *thangka* painting depicting the Palden Drepung Paradise.[169]

At the request of his devout followers at Dölung, Jamgön bestowed upon the large gathering all four complete empowerments of the Dagpo Kargyud tradition during his stay there. He also gave his followers oral transmission of Samaya Observance. The biography asserts that due to following his pure religious practice and the instructions he bestowed, the number of people undergoing retreat at Dolung Gönpa increased greatly. As Jamgön's main intention still was to pursue a secluded life of teaching and meditation, he thought of establishing a school for monks (*lcog grva*) in accordance with the monk-code (*bca' yig*) laid down by *zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal; he even gave an instruction on the Six Doctrines of Nāropa[170] and urged some to practise the esoteric yogic exercises of the same. However, he was unable to bring to fruition his

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169 The Byang-chub *mchod rten* stands outside the entrance on the eastern side of the dgon-pa. The *thang-ka* is preserved there as a *nang rten*. See Fig. 41. See for details *JGNT–II* 117a6–118a2.

170 The Six Doctrines (Yogas) of Nāropa or *Nā ro chos drug*:

1. yoga of psychic heat (*gtum mo*).
2. yoga of clear light (*'od gsal*).
3. yoga of illusory body (*sgyu lus*).
4. yoga of the state of union (*zung 'jug*).
5. yoga of consciousness transference (*'pho ba*).
6. yoga of entering a corpse (*grong 'jug*).

idea of establishing the school, as he narrated to his biographer with great regret later. Still, he never forgot his original idea and urged his pupil to carry out the plan.

Jamgön went to Wangdü Phodrang at the invitation of *geshe* Ngawang Gyamtsho (*dge bshes* Ngag-dbang rgya-mtsho) who later became the 9th Desi of Bhutan (rg. 1719–1729). Jamgön taught *geshe* Ngawang Gyamtsho the complete writing-system of *lantsā* and *wartula* scripts and he eventually became a very skilful calligrapher. When the latter became Desi, he in turn paid much respect to Jamgön.

Jamgön heard that the most learned spiritual master from the Hidden Land (*sbas gnas*) of Drejong ['Bras-mo-ljongs; Sikkim] named Chökyi Gyamtsho (Chos kyi rgya-mtsho) had arrived in Punakha. He immediately travelled to Punakha and received from him the complete set of teachings of the Nyingma tradition.[171] Jamgön in return offered many material gifts as well as the core teachings of the Drukpa Kagyud tradition. Following this fruitful meeting, he returned to his Gönpa at Dölung. Shortly afterwards, Jamgön went again to Wangdü Phodrang where *jetsün* Ngawang Samten (*rje btsun* Ngag-dbang bsam-gtan) was residing, and received from him teachings on different subjects.[172] In return, Jamgön imparted various teachings, including on the Pema Thangyig, afterwards going back to his Gönpa.

Drungyig Ngawang Tshering (*drung yig* Ngag-dbang tshe-ring) who ruled as the 6th Desi of Bhutan (rg. 1701–1703) had received a good impression of Jamgön as spiritual master, and he thought that it was not

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171 The teachings included: the [*Bla ma*] *dGongs 'dus* cycle once revealed by Sangs-rgyas gling-pa (1340–96) (see ed. publ. by Sönam Tobgay Kazi, Gangtog 1972), the latter's *Padma Thang yig*, and empowerment and oral transmission of *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgrol* revealed by Zhig-po gling-pa (1524–83) (ed. publ. by Sherab Gyaltshen Lama, Gangtog 1976), as well as empowerment and oral transmission of the [*Ma ṇi*] *bKa' 'bum* of Srong-tsan sgam-po, the *Don dbang* of Mahākārunikā also according to Sangs-rgyas gling-pa and the *Byang grol bum sgrub* revealed by rGya Zhang-khrom, the great, but enigmatic Bum-thang *gter ston*.

172 For the extensive amount of teachings he received, see the list *JGNT–II* 121b6–22b2.

proper to let Jamgön's mother and son suffer at Dagana. He issued an order allowing them to return to their home at Amorimu. On receiving the command from the Desi, the mother and son were extremely delighted. They immediately set off on their journey towards their home. But by the time they reached Uma, the Desi unfortunately had already passed away [1704], and subsequently the Pönlop of Uma had been instructed by the still threatening faction around Gedün Chöphel to stop the mother and son from travelling on homewards, as a result of which they were delayed in Uma for more than one year.

It was *jetsün* Damchö Pekar, the 4th Je Khenpo (rg. 1697–1707) who later ordered the 7th Desi of Bhutan, Samten Tenzin, *alias* Ön Penjor (rg. 1704–1707) and his cabinet ministers to allow Jamgön's mother and brother to return in safety to their home. The Desi could not go against the order of the Je Khenpo. He felt compelled to send a letter to the Uma Pönlop instructing him to permit them to travel to their home. They now headed for Wangdü Phodrang where they were met by Jamgön, who gave them comfort in the form of a Dharma admonition. Soon after, Jamgön returned to his Gönpa at Dölung while his mother and brother proceeded to their home at Amorimu.

Arriving at their village, they found that their house had collapsed and nothing was left except some ruins standing amidst bushes and trees. They were in a perplexed state not knowing whether or not to undertake the necessary repair work to their house when the government again fined them two horses (*gzhung nas chad pa rta gnyis bkal*). Shocked to hear about this fine since they possessed nothing – not even the barest necessities – they again turned to Jamgön for help. Tenzin Phüntshog (bsTan-'dzin phun-tshogs), Jamgön's brother, was dispatched to Jamgön to ask him for the horses. Jamgön, however, refused to give anything, stating that whatever few things he possessed were all offerings which had been made out of total devotion to him, and therefore should be used only for virtuous purposes. He advised Tenzin Phüntshog that the family should arrange payment of the fine themselves. They did so accordingly, and paid it to the government.

Chapter VI

DUTIFUL MISSION

1. Nomination as Court Priest to the Royal Family of Ladakh

Ladakh and Bhutan have noticeable historical resemblance as Himalayan countries sharing a common religious culture and distinct political status from Tibet. Despite being separated by a considerable distance, they entertained, over successive periods, good relations through their rulers' common allegiance and shared patronage of the Drukpa Kagyudpa School, a relationship not least born from their common opposition to political developments in Tibet proper.

The Drukpa Kagyudpa School (both the Northern and the Southern branch) entertained close ties with Ladakh already from the late 16th century, arguably initiated during the reign of the King Jamyang Namgyal (rg. 1595–1616), a devout supporter of Drukpa lore and hierarchs.[173] A key role was played not least by the famous Taktshang Repa Ngawang Gyamtsho (sTag-tshang ras-pa Ngag-dbang rgya-mtsho, 1574–1651),

173 Cf. Petech 1977: 38ff.

who became court priest of the Ladakhi King Senge Namgyal (rg. 1616–23, 1624–1642). Almost unaided, he pioneered a conversion of the Ladakhi court to the Drukpa creed and School. He early had met *künkhyen* Pemakarpo, but in particular he is recorded as pupil of the Drukpa master and influential throne-holder of Dechen Chökhor monastery, Lhatsewa Ngawang Zangpo (1546–1615), who for his part had indirectly contributed to the splitting or schism of the internal Drukpa School at the close of the 16th century. It was the successors of this Dechen Chökhor seat that were to become court preceptors of the Ladakhi court.[174] The contacts between the Drukpa hierarchs at Ralung and the court in Ladakh were reinforced during the reign of King Senge Namgyal.

However, neither Bhutanese nor Ladakhi sources are entirely clear as to when Bhutan's contact with Ladakh and its court actually began, the earliest concrete contacts possibly dating from around 1616, when *zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal sought exile in the south. King Senge Namgyal and the Zhabdrung were reported to have maintained close ties after the latter's arrival in Bhutan, strengthening these through regular exhange of gifts and letters (See Appendix IV).

Jamgön's visit to Ladakh reinforced these existing contacts established during the Zhabdrung's time. His visit took place between 1706 and 1712, when the reigning king of Ladakh was Nyima Namgyal (rg. 1694–1729), great grandson of Senge Namgyal. The King sent a messenger with a letter along with gifts to the government of Bhutan at Punakha, requesting that a lama be sent to his court. In Bhutan, the entire cabinet, with one voice it seems, was of the conviction that Jamgön was the ideal candidate for the prestigious mission to the Ladakhi court, on account of his ability and the experience he had gained from his lengthy stay in Kham.

Hearing that Jamgön had to leave for Ladakh, his followers at Dölung and Chunglung were unhappy. Unwilling to part with Jamgön, they

174 See P. Schwieger 1996: 86f.; Schuh 1983: 22ff.

proclaimed: "Such a graceful compassionate lord like Jamgön cannot be matched even by the difficult-to-obtain Wish-Fulfilling Jewel."[175] They decided to go to the capital and make a request to the government that their Lama be permitted to stay back. Joined by Jamgön, his followers and entourage arrived at Punakha. Patrons and followers, with great hope, repeatedly requested the government to permit Jamgön to remain in his post as head of the Dölung Gönpa. Jamgön himself, feeling committed to his devout patrons and followers, and also on account of his advancing age and failing health – also requested permission not to be sent to Ladakh. The government initially proved responsive and allowed him to return to his Gönpa at Dölung in Khothangkha.

Hearing that Jamgön was not going to be dispatched to Ladakh, the Ladakhi messengers submitted a renewed request to the government, adding that Jamgön's presence in particular would reveal to all Ladakhis the special spiritual quality possessed by the Bhutanese religious masters. Realizing how highly esteemed Jamgön was, the messengers stated that they did not want any other master in case Jamgön was not assigned. Moverover, it was predetermined by a prophecy (*lung*) of *tertön* Dorje Drolö (*gter ston* rDo-rje Gro-lod),[176] which read:

> Whether Apa *chöje*'s [i.e. Jamgön] sitting mat can serve as monk's robe (*sham thabs*) for the court Lama of Ladakh or not [i.e. serve as court priest], indeed only [your] friend Phajo [i.e. Druk Rabgye] will know [i.e. decide]![177]

In line with the prophecy, the Dzongpön of Thimphu, Druk Rabgye ('Brug Rab-rgyas) urged and entreated the government to remain adamant; so the government once again commanded Jamgön to go to Ladakh as court priest to the Ladakhi King.

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175 *JGNT–II* 128a2–3: *shin tu rnyed par dka' ba'i yid bzhin gyi nor bus kyang mi mtshon.*

176 One of the Tibetan treasure revealers who came to Bhutan and stayed at sPu-ṇa-kha. Cf. *Druk Dron* 291

177 *JGNT–II* 130a1–2: *a pa chos rje'i gding ba de la dvags bla ma'i sham thabs la 'debs mi 'debs grogs po pha jo rang shes mod.*

Jamgön now saw no way of rejecting the governmental order. He left for Punakha, where on an auscipicious date and in the presence of Ngawang Künga Gyaltshen (Ngag-dbang kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan; 1689–1713),[178] the first incarnation of Gyalse Jampel Dorje, he was requested to sit on the three-fold seat and was honoured with rich presents including a scarf and a golden coloured robe made of old silk patterned with red stripes, and was invested as government representative to the court of the King of Ladakh. He received teaching transmission of the ideal Conduct of a Bodhisattva (Bodhicāryāvatāra) authored by the great Ācārya (spiritual teacher) Śāntideva from Ngawang Künga Gyaltshen. It was at that time that the government on the request of Jamgön released prisoners throughout the country.

Unlike earlier when he left for Kham, Jamgön this time did not go to his native Amorimu to bid farewell to his mother; after the investiture ceremony had been held, he immediately set off on his journey to Trashichödzong, in Thimphu, accompanied by his two brothers. His aged mother sent a message to Jamgön through the two brothers. The message said:

> On earlier occasions, we, mother and son, were subjected to countless hardships the like of which were not experienced [by others], and although the family was innocent and had never shown any disloyalty to the government, nevertheless we suffered limitless punishment. Now, you have been assigned to undertake the important mission of representing our government, so bear in mind your responsibilities! I will pray that you return after having fulfilled your mission and pray that we meet again. Until then, I, your aged mother, will patiently wait for your return and ensure that meanwhile no harm is inflicted upon me.[179]

Arriving at Trashichödzong, Jamgön went into the presence of the Je Khenpo Damchö Pekar to request a farewell blessing. He saw that the Je Khenpo was in a sad mood. Jamgön received many gifts in form

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178 He was born in 1689 at mTshams-'brog dgon-pa in bKra-shi-sgang. Upon recognization as the incarnation of r*Gyal-sras* 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje, he was invited to the capital and was installed on the throne. He was given honour and respect equal to that of Zhabs-drung incarnation See *Druk Karpo* 130–31; *LCB–II* 256–57.

179 *JGNT–II* 131b4–132a1.

of good spiritual counsel, sacred pills and protecting-thread. The biography portrays the depression experienced by the Je Khenpo at the leave-taking. It is recorded that the Je Khenpo sent Jamgön a robe with colourful floral designs, delivered to him by one of the Je Khenpo's attendants.

2. Departure for Ladakh

A Sublime Being like Him [Jamgön]
is Rarer than a Star during daytime
Farewell Words Expressed by Damchö Pekar, 4th Je Khenpo of Bhutan[180]

In 1706, Jamgön, then aged fifty-nine, set off with his party on his journey. On their arrival at Rinpung Dzong in Paro, they were well served by the local Pönlop. They left Paro via Tremola (sPre-mo-la) and when they reached Phagri Samdrub Lhakhang (Phag-ri bSam-grub lha-khang), they halted there for two days. Jamgön requested the local authority to issue him with a travel permit. When asked who he was, he responded that his name was Lama Tenpa Dargye (bsTan-pa dar-rgyas), giving as reason for his journey that it was auspicious for the spread of Drukpa teachings. The name Jamgön had given was then entered on the travel permit. On the First Day of the Fifth Month – an auspicious day – they set forth on their journey. On the way, rain and hailstorms were their unfriendly travel companions, and Jamgön was forced to sleep in muddy and wet surroundings, sometimes also missing his meals. When they arrived at the holy site of Chumig Ngulchu Bum (Chu-mig dNgul-chu-'bum), they rested there for three days. Jamgön drew an image of *jetsün* [Milarepa] on a cliff face to generate merit for all living beings that happened to pass by. Men carrying an official letter arrived from Pel Sakya Monastery with fifteen yaks to receive them.

Travelling on further, they came to the pass leading to [Mang-yul] Gung-thang [i.e. district of sKyid-grong], where Guru Padmasambhava

180 *JGNT–II* 132b5: *khong lta bu'i skyes chen nyin mo'i skar ma las kyang dkon pa yin.*

left for Sinyul (Srin-yul).[181] They paid a visit to the footprint of Guru which was enshrined in a *chörten* there and also saw an imprint of Guru's riding horse Tachog Bhalaha (rTa-mchog Bha-la-ha). They made many prayers at the pass before proceeding on their way down the other side.

Accompanied by a Lowo Lama (Glo-bo bla-ma, i.e. Lama of native of Mustang), they arrived at the shore of a river called Jema Yungdrung[182] in Upper Tsang (gTsang-stod Bye-ma g.Yung-drung). It was during summer time and the river had become swollen and was running with a swift current and the local people did not have the courage to cross it. But Jamgön and his entourage crossed the river without the slightest hesitation or fear. On seeing this, the local people present were most amazed at their bravery. Traversing large nomadic areas and walking and riding for days through country devoid of water where there were only a couple of small hamlets, they finally reached the shore of Lake Madrö Maphang Yutsho (Ma-dros Ma-phang g.Yu-mtsho, i.e. Lake Mansarowar), the waters of which were as vast and crystal-clear as if the blue sky had descended on earth from above.

After travelling on for another day from the place called Gangri, they were received by a reception party dispatched by the presiding Gangri Dorzin (Gangs-ri rDor-'dzin),[183] the representative of the Kailash region under the jurisdiction of the Bhutanese government. The party escorted them to Barkhai Thang (Bar-kha'i-thang) where the Dorzin was on an alms round of wheat. Here Jamgön and the Dorzin met and immediately engaged in a long and entertaining conversation in a very cordial atmosphere. The next day, the Dorzin left ahead of Jamgön for Nyenpori (gNyen-po-ri).

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181 Here meaning Sri Lanka, considered a land of cannibal demons, as depicted in Indian and Tibetan mythology.

182 gTsang-stod Bye-ma gyung-drung was an old Bon-po site and the place may be associated with gTsang-stod Bye-ma-la, the westernmost border of the old imperial gyas-ru district.

183 He may readily be identified with *sku drung* Ngag-dbang chos-'phel who had been appointed Gangs-ri *rdor 'dzin* by the 4th Desi in around 1693. But since Byams-mgon was visiting the area in 1706, it is likely that another Gangs-ri *rdor 'dzin* by then might have been appointed; see also *Druk Dron* 227, 267.

Arriving at a place called Serzhong (gSer-gzhong), Jamgön and his entourage visited the site of a footprint of the Buddha which was surrounded by footprints of five hundred Arhats. When they reached Nyenpori Dzong (gNyen-po-ri rDzong), the seat of Gangri Dorzin, they were warmly received, and served with great hospitality amidst a grand *zhugdrel* ceremony hosted on their account. The party rested at Nyenpori for four days and during their stay visited the temple to view the sacred objects enshrined there, the main image being the Buddha Amitabha carved from white marble (*rdo kamarupa*), considered to be the most sacred object of all. They also went to Mt. Kailash (Gangs Rin-po-che), the holy mountain, resting overnight there at the cave of Zuthrulphug (rDzu-'phrul-phug). Jamgön's biographer, Śākya Rinchen offers details of the enchanting panorama of Mt. Kailash, a holy site said to enrapture visitors to it.[184] After completing this excursion, they returned to Nyenpori Dzong.

Sending his attendants along the main track, Jamgön then took the circuitous route through remote places for his own enjoyment, and visited the pilgrimage site of Pretapuri (Pre-ta-pu-ri) along the way. When he finally reached Ge Dzong (Gad rDzong), he was ceremoniously received by the local authorities and lamas and was presented with excellent gifts and served respectfully. Similarly, the Gön Lama (dGon bla-ma) of Garthog Pönpo (sGar-thog dPon-po) also respectfully invited him to his house. Receiving and serving Jamgön with a traditional Kashmiri-style *zhugdrel* ceremony, the Lama expressed his happiness at having Jamgön as an honoured guest as follows:

> It seems that we, being distantly related, are destined to convert the beings of the borderland in general and the living beings of the Ngari area in particular. Keeping this in mind, you should undertake the task, in whatever way you can, to benefit the living beings.[185]

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184 In conformity with pilgrim guides to Mt. Kailash, the author describes the site's fabulous nature, the mountain beautiful to behold like a water-crystal moon, towering high and majestically penetrating into the midst of the sky. Albeit outwardly merely of rocks and cliffs, inwardly it was the *maṇḍalic* abode of Cakrasaṃvara and a site blessed by numerous saints. For details see *JGNT–II* 137a6–138b3.

185 *Ibid*, 139a3–4: *nged rang pha spun tsho spyir sa mtha' dang / sgos mnga' ris*

Whereupon, they enjoyed a lengthy conversation with one another other.

> While they were at Ge Dzong, a strong and swift galloping pony vanished without a trace. Attendants were unable to find it wherever they looked and lost hope of getting it back. When this was reported to Jamgön, he immediately invoked the protector deity, Gaynyen Jagpa Melen, who instantly summoned and brought back the pony, and all people present marvelled at this feat.

They continued their journey. On their way, they were also offered elaborate service and respect by the Ngud Lama (rNgud bla-ma).[186] Travelling slowly onwards, they passed by the side of a great river emerging from a source resembling a lion's mouth (*chu klung chen po seng ge kha 'bab*).[187] After a day's jouney from this river, they were caught in a violent storm which blew their hats and clothes off, and even almost blew away both men and horses.

Finally, they arrived within the territory of Ladakh, where they were received by the Chödanpa (*sku tshab* Chos-ldan-pa, brother of Kalön Sönam Lhündrub), the King's representative, who served them tea and provided fresh riding horses. The Treasurer of Hemis Monastery (He-mig phyag-mdzod-pa) also arrived to receive them. They eventually arrived at Takna Gönpa (sTag-sna dgon-pa),[188] seat of the supreme

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phyogs su 'dul skal bab pa 'dra zhig gda' na / thugs dgongs bskyed la / sems can gyi 'gro don rgya che gnang dgos. It appears that the one here referred to as "dGon Bla-ma" in fact was a Bla-ma from dGon 'Obs-mtsho, appointed by the Bhutanese government to look after donatory estates owned by the government. The Bla-ma in question may have been related to Byams-mgon.

186 The Bhutanese representative of the rNgud district, i.e. *Bla ma* bsTan-pa lhun-grub?; see *Druk Dron* 227.

187 It is believed that the four great rivers originate from the four directions of Mt. Kailash called *Kha-bab rnam-bzhi*. They are:

1. The Ganges from an opening in a rock to the east, shaped like an elephant;
2. The Sindhu from an opening in a rock to the south, shaped like a peacock;
3. The Pakshu (also known as the Yarlung) from an opening in a rock to the west, shaped like a horse; and
4. The Sita from an opening in a rock to the north, shaped like a lion.

188 The sTag-sna or "Tiger's Nose" Monastery is believed to have been first founded around 1618 by a great scholar-saint of Bhutan called *chos rje* rMug [=sMon]-'dzin-pa, who acted as Bhutanese spiritual reresentative to the court of La-dvags

authority of the Southern Drukpa Kagyudpa in Ladakh. The journey had taken three months and it was now the Eighth Lunar Month according to the Tibetan calendar.

Upon their arrival, monks and the general public of the locality gave Jamgön a very warm welcome. Offering a considerable amount of gifts, the Kutshab Chödan welcomed the guest Lama with good words. Similarly, monks and other patrons also offered their own share of offerings. Jamgön was thus received with great honour and respect.

3. Arrival in Ladakh: Meeting with King and Royal Family Members

After they had rested for a few days at Takna Gönpa, the Kalön Sönam Lhündrub (bKa'-blon bSod-nams lhun-grub)[189] arrived from the King's Palace [i.e. Leh] with a good present of welcome to invite Jamgon. There at the Leh palace, Jamgön was accommodated in a white tent set up in a royal garden. Every day, ministers successively came to pay their respects to him and inquire about his health.

Seven days later, after having met all the ministers, he finally met King Nyima Namgyal in his palace at Leh (sLes). The King was standing

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Seng-ge rnam-rgyal. The monastery site formed part of one of the many religious estates offered to Bhutan and became the main seat of the Southern 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud Order in La-dvags; see *STM* 2004: 11-12. It was here that later spiritual representatives of Bhutan including Byams-mgon Ngag-dbang rGyal-mtshan were based during their sojourn in La-dvags. See Appendix IV.

The monastery preserves (see e.g. *STM* 2004: 15-18) numerous precious artefacts, icons, paintings and historical documents related to Bhutanese history. It is told that these precious artefacts were gifted by Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal. The successive reincarnations of the sTag-sna *sprul sku* act as the throne-holder of the monastery and uphold the teachings of the Southern 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud Order. Its branch monasteries were those of rMud and Kha-ru and those of sTag-ri-mo, 'Bar-gdan and Sa-ni in Zangskar.

189 He was 'the Blon-chen or Prime Minister' in King Nyi-ma rnam-rgyal's government. Among others, he had been responsible for acquiring a Bhutanese handwritten copy of the bKa'-'gyur that comprised of 108 volumes, which today is among the treasures of the sTog Palace. For details about this bKa'-'gyur, see *MLNK* 1984: 288, 296.

in front of a huge throne, wearing a loose jacket-like robe of Chinese silk with a long, coarsely woven [Tibetan] woollen shawl draped loosely over the upper part of his body, like a mask dancer, seemingly comfortable in his rich dress.

The King received Jamgön with a long scarf and the nine-fold set of presents. Jamgön was offered a seat at the head of the left row, followed by his attendants, while the ministers were seated on the right. An elaborate reception ceremony followed in his honour. The King remained silent, while the Kalön Sönam Lhündrub made inquiries concerning the situation in Bhutan and about Jamgön's journey. Minister Künga (Kun-dga') posed a few questions pertaining to his dharma-activities and concerning sacremental substances and miracle pills such as "*damzey rolpa chenpo" (dam rdzas rol pa chen po), lhenkey rilbu (lhan skyes ril bu) and padro rilbu (pa dro [= spa gro] ril bu)*[190] to which, he gave extensive replies concerning their origin and significance. An elaborate *zhugdrel* ceremony was also conducted at the eight-pillared palace in honour of Jamgön. The King made offerings of one hundred plates of various kinds of fruits to Jamgön, and also provided thirty platefuls for the monks and twenty-one platefuls for the other people gathered there.

190 Considered most sacred, these sacramental substances or pills have a long tradition and were particularly cherished in the 'Brug-pa school. During the consecration ceremony of Rin-spungs rDzong in sPa-ro in 1645, Zhabs-drung rin-po-che along with *dpon slob* Rig-'dzin snying-po performed the "*dgongs 'dus sgrub chen ril sgrub*" (ritual ceremony concerning accomplishment of "sacred pills" of the *dGongs 'dus* cycle of treasure teachings originally ascribed to Sangs-rgyas gling-pa). The ceremony was said to have been a great success, and to have Manifested great powers, so that the holy water vase overflowed of its own accord. These examplary pills became widely known as "Pa-gro [= sPa-'gro] ril bu," otherwise known as "*Dam-rdzas myong grol chen mo or rol pa chen po.*" For details, see *BRZNT* Vol. NGA 127a5ff. Similarly, the "*ril sgrub*" ceremony was performed for ten days (*TRNT* 291b1–293b2) presided over by rGya sras bsTan-'dzin rab-sgyas, by the 3rd rJe mKhan-po Pad-dkar lhun-grub (rg. 1689-97) and by Mi-pham 'Brug-sgra rgya-mtsho (1665–1701), the rebirth of bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas's own father, Mi-pham Tshe-dbang bstan-'dzin in sPa-ro. Around 1680, "*lhans-skyes ril sgrub*" was performed at sPu-na-kha by more than 500 monks for 15 days, presided over by bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas, with Byams-mgon also taking part. These pills, too, became popular due to their high value of blessing and sacredness. Ref. *TRNT* 158b1–159a6.

After a couple of days, the King said that Jamgön had been invited to Hemis Monastery as the court priest of Hemis Dung,[191] but first he should undergo retreat at Shelkar (Shel-mkhar) [192] and conduct a "longevity sādhana" (*thugs dam tshe sgrub*). Following the royal order, Jamgön went to the Shelkar Palace. In the inner sanctum of the palace was a three-storeyed high statue of Buddha Śākyamuni with a neck made of white bronze and almond-shaped eyes as wide as a bow. In front of this huge image, Jamgön made many prostrations and recited prayers. After a few months of practice of longevity sādhana, the Hemis Treasurer came to invite him. Before leaving for Hemis, Jamgön presented the King with longevity substances and then left for Gönpa Thegchog (dGon-pa Theg-mchog)[193] en route to Hemis.[194]

Jamgön met the two princely Dung-Brothers with whom he exchanged scarves and with whom he was seated on an equal level. Jamgön in return satisfied their desire for religious discourse. The two Dungs of Hemis became devoted to Jamgön after being impressed by his high spiritual instructions. From that time on, they decided of their own accord to take a lower seat in token of respect for their new spiritual master. During Jamgön's subsequent stays at Hemis, the two Dungs and other disciples requested him to give empowerments. For almost a

191 Referred to as "gDung Rin-po-che or gDung rnam-gnyis," they were the two younger princely brothers of King Nyi-ma rnam-rgyal, viz. dBang-phyug rnam-rgyal and dGa'-ldan rnam-rgyal who in fact were monks or royal prelates and who had chosen to stay at Hemis monastery. See *MLNK* 1984: 274, 285.

192 Shelkar (Shel-mkhar) – today known as Shey (Shel) – is situated 16 kms from Sle (Leh). An old fort and temple are to be seen there. It was the palace of the first king of La-dvags lHa-chen dPal gyi mgon and of successive kings. It is recorded that Byams-mgon Ngag-dbang rgyal-mtshan stayed in this palace most of the time accomplishing longevity prayers for the royal family.

193 This dGon-pa situated 40 kms east of Leh is today known as Chimde (i.e. lCe-s/lde or lCe-'bre). It is located on a spur and was founded by sTag-tshang ras-pa Ngag-dbang rgya-mtsho (1574–1651) with King Seng-ge rnam-rgyal acting as patron. Its full name is lCe-sde/'bre Theg-mchog dGon-pa. The successive reincarnations of sTag-tshang ras-pa act as its incumbent.

194 Hemis is situated 48 kms from Leh. It is the largest and most famous of all monasteries in La-dvags and was founded by sTag-tshang ras-pa who was invited to La-dvags by King Seng-ge rnam-rgyal. The successive reincarnations of sTag-tshang ras-pa act as the incumbent of the monastery. It was used as the Royal Seat prior to its transformation into a monastery.

year, he gave empowerment ceremonies of Drukpa Kagyud teachings. The King and his ministers were among those who attended, and at the end they gave many offerings by way of symbolic payment to their Lama.

During that period, while he was bestowing the empowerment of Samvara, a *vajra* fell from his hand onto the floor; it was said that a clear imprint of the *vajra* was left on the floor. On one occasion, while Jamgön was giving the Hayagrīva Longevity empowerment blessing, King Nyima Namgyal and his ministers arrived to attend the ceremony. Among the King's attendants was a yogi who tried to challenge Jamgön by way of false argument in debate. Jamgön without any sense of arrogance defeated him with soft words in accordance with the Dharma. The yogi now with great devotion and respect threw himself at Jamgön's feet.

At one time, Jamgön, accompanied by Dung Rinpoche, set off for Rebag (Re-bag) towards Garzha (Gar-zha) having heard that there was a self-created blessings-bestowing Ārya statue [i.e. Ārya Avalokiteśvara] in the temple there. On reaching a pass, they were received by Dung Rinpoche's uncle Nono Chung (No-no gcung) who invited them to his residence. They finally arrived at Rebag, where the self-created Ārya was located. The temple which housed the statue was made of stone with a measure of one fathom in length and it had a stone pillar inside and the entire layout was beautiful. When the entrance door was opened, one could see the white marble statue which had one head and six arms. On the hair-knot was an almond-eyed image of Amitabha, emitting rays of light. Jamgön made prostrations several times in front of the sacred image.

Concerning the origin of this particular self-created Avalokiteśvara – according to the legend – it was said that in the upper part of that region, there were one hundred and eight streams flowing white like milk from which seven brothers (*sku mched bdun*) were born. The eldest one (*mthu bo*) once said to a cow-herder: "My seat is in the bottom of the valley, so please take me there carrying me on your back, but without looking

behind you." The cow-herder did not know why he should not look back. Out of curiosity, he looked behind him and saw all seven brothers successively dissolving into the ground. The cow-herder managed to grasp with his hands the head of the last brother. That head is said to be the one now in the Temple of Gandhola.

At the one end of the valley, there was another temple called Makhu (Ma-khu = Mar-khu; the "Oil Temple"), where Jamgön saw a statue of a blessings-bestowing Vajrayoginī made of cast metal (*li sku*). There was an oily black square-shaped stone (also called *makhu*) said to be the thumb of Vajravarahī, which even the strongest man with all his might would not be able to lift and carry around the smaller temple more than two or three times; but Jamgön himself took it on his head and circumbulated [the entire temple complex] once while making extensive prayers. Thereafter, he visited the temple called Ghandhola where he saw the head of the last brother. Taking it in his hands, he made prayers, whereupon shimmering drops of nectar dripped from its neck.

While on their pilgrimage throughout the Garzha area, they arrived at a village called Kardang (dKar-dvangs),[195] where Jamgön saw the foot-print of Götshangpa Gönpo Dorje (1189–1258).[196] There had been no rain in that area for three years, the fields lay parched, no crops were ready for harvest, and as a result the people had been suffering from hunger. The local people requested Jamgön to bring rain. Jamgön consented and made rituals that would bring rain. The rain started to pour down, helping the crops to grow.

After Jamgön's successful pilgrimage tour, they returned to Hemis monastery. At that point, there was a severe epidemic (*dmar cer*) in the district and many people were concerned about the deadly disease. Jamgön and his disciples paid no heed to it whatsoever. Jamgön

195 This is the sacred site associated with rGyal-ba rGod-tshang-pa.

196 rJe rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rdo-rje (1189–1258), one of the chief disciples of the 'Brug-pa founder gTsang-pa rgya-ras was later considered the founder of the sTod-'Brug or the Upper 'Brug school. Since he practised asceticism at the "Vulture Cliff," he received the name rGod-tshang-pa.

distributed special blessed water to those infected with the disease as a curative endeavour. Wherever it was distributed, people did not contract the disease and the blessed water helped relieve the symptoms in those who had already contracted it.

The King summoned Jamgön to his Leh palace. During one summer session, in accordance with the King's command, he conducted longevity sādhana, and fire pūjā or offering (*sbyin sreg*) and curse expulsion rituals (*tshe sgrub byad grol*). The King, as always, was very impressed and pleased with his court chaplain. Although the King personally wanted to receive further empowerments and dharma instruction directly from Jamgön, it seemed that this was somehow prevented by the ministers. In a conversation between the King and his ministers, the view was expressed that to be a court priest, it was not enough to be a virtuous monk and come from a noble family: one should also be able to display miraculous powers. This conversation was overheard by one of Jamgön's attendants, who reported it to him. To this implied criticism, Jamgön merely responded:

> Signs of spiritual accomplishments [or miracles} depend upon the size of merit that one's disciples have accumulated. If the disciples have no pure vision and faith, it would not have any benefit even when they meet Buddha in reality. So, to be able to receive blessings, it is extremely important that one should have devotion and faith with pure vision. In reality, lamas of today and spiritual friends (*dge ba'i bshes gnyen*) are all Maṇifested Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and although they produce an incessant flow of signs of accomplishment, the reason why one does not see them is that the vision of ordinary people is usually obscured by wrong views.[197]

The attendant was amazed at his master's reply, and merely stood reflecting upon his master's unfathomable mind. For the first time,

197 *JGNT–II* 146a4–b6: *grub rtags kyi rigs 'di gdul bya rang rang gi bsags pa'i che chung la rag las pa yin / gdul bya rang snang ma dag na sangs rgyas dang dngos su mjal yang phan pa med / byin rlabs 'jug pa la rang snang dag pa'i dad pa dang mos pa gal che ba yin / da lta'i bla ma dge ba'i bshes gnyen rnams kyang sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa 'ba' zhig yin cing grub rtags rgyun mi chad du bzhugs kyang ma mjal ba de so so skye bo rnams log rtog gi sgrib pa ches pas lan.*

the Ladakhi people's faith in Jamgön began to waver a little, but later, when they came to know his powers, they became his fully committed followers.

4. Pilgrimage to Kashmir and Phullahari

Jamgön had a wish to undertake a pilgrimage to Phullahari/Pushpahari,[198] the sacred site prophesied by the Buddha, near the northern border of India, close to the city of Kashmir where *jetsün* Nāropa (1016–1100)[199] had attained enlightenment. He reported his intention to the King. The King responded: "The trip will not be possible since the destination is far away and the journey will be full of perils." Jamgön, however, persisted in his request and the King subsequently allowed him to go.

After arrangements for provision of the best food and a guide for the journey had been made, the King issued a decree to all his representatives in the different districts under his jurisdiction, commanding them to provide the best possible assistance and guidance. Before leaving, Jamgön told his attendants that whether or not they joined him on the pilgrimage would be their own decision. They all resolved to come with him, and the party left on the Twenty-Fifth Day of the Eight Month of the Fire-Pig Year, corresponding to 1707.

They travelled and arrived at a village called Timugkha (gTi-mug-mkhar).[200] There Jamgön saw the self-created white marble statue of Āvalokiteśvara. Further on, they arrived at a village called Kharlatse (mKhar-la-rtse), where they stayed for two days. Then they came to a

198 This place became famous in the history of Tibetan Buddhism because it was here that Mar-pa Chos-kyi blo-gros (1012–1097), Nāropa's closest disciple, later received his final instruction from Nāropa. Nāropa is recorded to have stayed there for six years.

199 Born in 1016 in Bengal, Nāropa lived until 1100. He holds a unique position in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. For details of his life, see Guenther 1963.

200 gTi-mug-mkhar, today known as gTing-mo-sgang, lies about 92 kms west of Leh. A castle stands there and it was said to have built by Grags-pa-'bum-lde (rg. *ca.* 1400–1440), the 17th king of the first La-dvags dynasty. A self-originated image of Āvalokiteśvara made of white marble can be seen there in the castle.

mountain pass called Düzhi (bDud-bzhi), close to the valley of Kashmir. There was an age-old tradition that anyone taking the route through this pass should sacrifice a living creature to appease the local mountain spirit. The female local spirit which had been residing there since time immemorial suddenly expressed her wrath by causing violent rain, dust storms and howling gales, and the whole area was darken, enveloped in black clouds. Snow fell incessantly, the palm-sized snow flakes coming from all directions, and people and horses almost sank into the snow. This is precisely what happened as the team struggled along now. All the attendants became agitated and extremely frightened, and they cried out in their terror. At that point, Jamgön said:

> When I went to Kham, I experienced similar snow storms again and again, and still was not harmed by them in any way. If you move your body, you will sink into the snow and die. If you remain still, even snow will be like your clothing and harm will not come to you.

Knowing that the appalling weather was a magical display which had been invoked by the local spirit, Jamgön subdued the angry spirit through delivery of a religious discourse, whereupon the weather turned pleasant again. Thereafter they continued their journey.

At that time of year in the Kashmir region, the farmers were out in the fields harvesting their crops, and when Jamgön and his entourage passed by, everyone stared at them as if they had not seen such people before. In former times, the Buddha's teachings had been widespread in the area and many ascetics had lived there, but now the Buddhist religion had disappeared and people were without any religious sentiment.[201]

Then they arrived at the regional headquarters of the King's representative, Hagam (Ha-gam) who extended a warm reception. They were highly pleased with the way they were treated there. After the King's representative had arranged the food provisions for the rest of

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201 Kashmir was the main seat of Buddhist learning during the time of Nāropa in the 10th and 11th century. At the age of 11 (in 1026), Nāropa went for study to Kashmir, where he is recorded to have stayed for three years, gaining a solid knowledge of the essential branches of learning. See Guenther 1963: Introduction.

their journey, they proceeded and stopped at a house said to be the Lahore Zhagsa or "Resting Resort." In the centre of the town was the so-called "Assembly Hall of Śrī Nāropa" and they went to see it. This hall was said to have had three hundred long pillars in former times. The inner part of the hall's central tower was now in ruins. In the middle of the hall there was a square stone floor, in the centre of which was a small pond from which water spouted upwards.

The hall had four annexes opening off it. Entrance to each annex was via a brick-lined doorway which led into a pillarless circular vestibule, shaped like a lotus flower. Each annexe was topped with a golden pinnacle. Although formerly a thriving monastery, the complex now had been taken over by heretics and had become a place for their worship. The wall paintings had been white-washed over, and even the stone statues had been toppled and broken up for use as paving stones. It was said that formerly the courtyard was square-shaped and spacious with levelled ground, and with an inner measurement of 138 steps.

Not far away from the city to the east, they saw the pilgrim site where one Arhat called Nyimai Gung (Nyi-ma'i dgung) was said to have formerly resided while converting [teaching] the entire land of Kashmir. In order to reach the place they had to cross a big river in a boat. At one place, they saw a fascinating building made of stones, square in shape with 20 corners and stone pillars that were without cracks and fissures. The Kashmiris said that a *siddha* (perfected master) called Tag-si-li-ma, the founder of Kashmir, had formerly resided there, wherefore the house was named accordingly.[202] It became the seat of Arhats. Later, Nāropa is said to have resided there too.

One day, they reached the place called Haribepa (Ha-ri-sbas-pa) situated to the south. There a tree had grown out of Nāropa's walking stick which he had planted there. It was now about one and half storeys high and its trunk bore an imprint of the front of Nāropa's body which had appeared

202 It appears that the Taxila (i.e. Taxila = in Sanskrit Takshasila, Takkasila or Takhasila) University in ancient Gandhara, now in ruins, located about 35 kilometres north-west of present-day Islamabad in Pakistan was named after him.

after he once embraced it. They also clearly saw imprints of Nāropa's two palms on a rock there. They heard that in that direction, there was the path leading straight to the land of the Nāgas, but there was no one around who could guide them there. Nearby were two twelve-sided wondrous houses which glittered like mirrors and had gilded interiors. This site was said to be formerly the camp site of King Ba-tsha ra-dza (Batsarāja) and his court priest.

In the lower part of the city, there was a big lake which looked like a melted blue sky, on which flocks of waterbirds were playing while others were flying above it. Also, they saw small stone huts, glittering in the sunlight amidst willow trees and beautiful meadows covered with flowering plants. The surroundings looked lush and green and full of brightly coloured flowers, and there were humming bees siphoning fluid from the flowers.

One day, they went by boat to see three *chörtens* known as Panchpura (Pantshpura) *alias* Bharabhurshi located in a lake. The *chörtens* were above the water from the circular vase upwards. Two Hindu Brahmins with grey moustaches also came by boat to see the *chörtens*. Since they were Buddhist, they posed to Jamgön a number of questions concerning the Kālacakra. Although Jamgön was not himself fluent in their language, nevertheless he gave a rough outline of the creations of cosmic aeons, and the movement of the sun, moon and stars and the two Brahmins were content and left.

The two Brahmins decided to visit Jamgön's campsite again. Gazing at Jamgön's face, they looked as if they wanted never to part from him; Jamgön taught them a number of *maṇi*-mantra recitations and although they could not understand each others' language, the Brahmins learned each one keenly by heart and after some time they also comprehended them. One of the Brahmins even accepted the Avalokiteśvara and his recitation as tutelary deity and, requesting Jamgön's rosary, he placed it on his head to receive its blessing. He asked Jamgön if he could hug him and Jamgön allowed him to do whatever he liked, whereupon he became even more devoted. He held Jamgön's feet and placed them on



Fig. 47 Takna Monastery, the seat of Southern Drukpa Kagyud in Ladakh. Photo: John Johnston



Fig. 48 *Chöje* Mukzinpa from a wall painting at Takna Monastery. Photo: Yonten Dargye

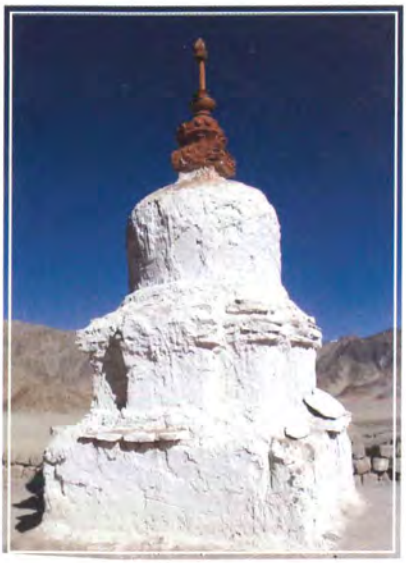


Fig. 49 A *chorten* believed to be the Kudung Chorten of *chöje* Mukzinpa at the entrance of Takna Monastery. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 50 A sculptural portrait of Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen kept at Takna Monastery.
Photo: Yonten Dargye

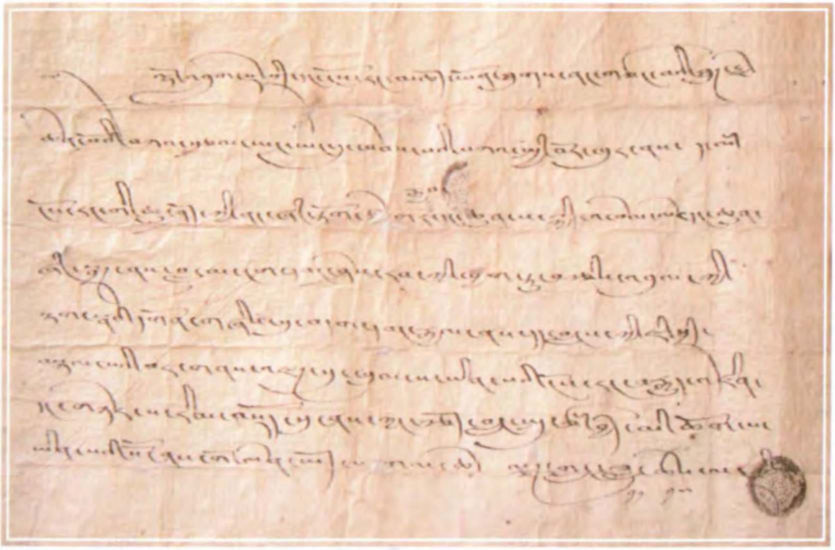


Fig. 51 A decree issued to the 6th Druk Lama of Takna Monastery Ngawang Sherab (*ca.* 1780–?) by the King of Ladakh. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 52 A saddle of *chöje* Mukzinpa's horse kept at Takna Monastery. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 52 Marble image of Avalokiteśvara preserved at Takna Monastery. Photo: John Johnston



Fig. 53 A set of Känjur kept at Takna Monastery. It is said to have been gifted by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal of Bhutan. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 54 Applique and embroidered *thangka* of Dösol Lhamo (Palden Lhamo). Photo: Yonten Dargye

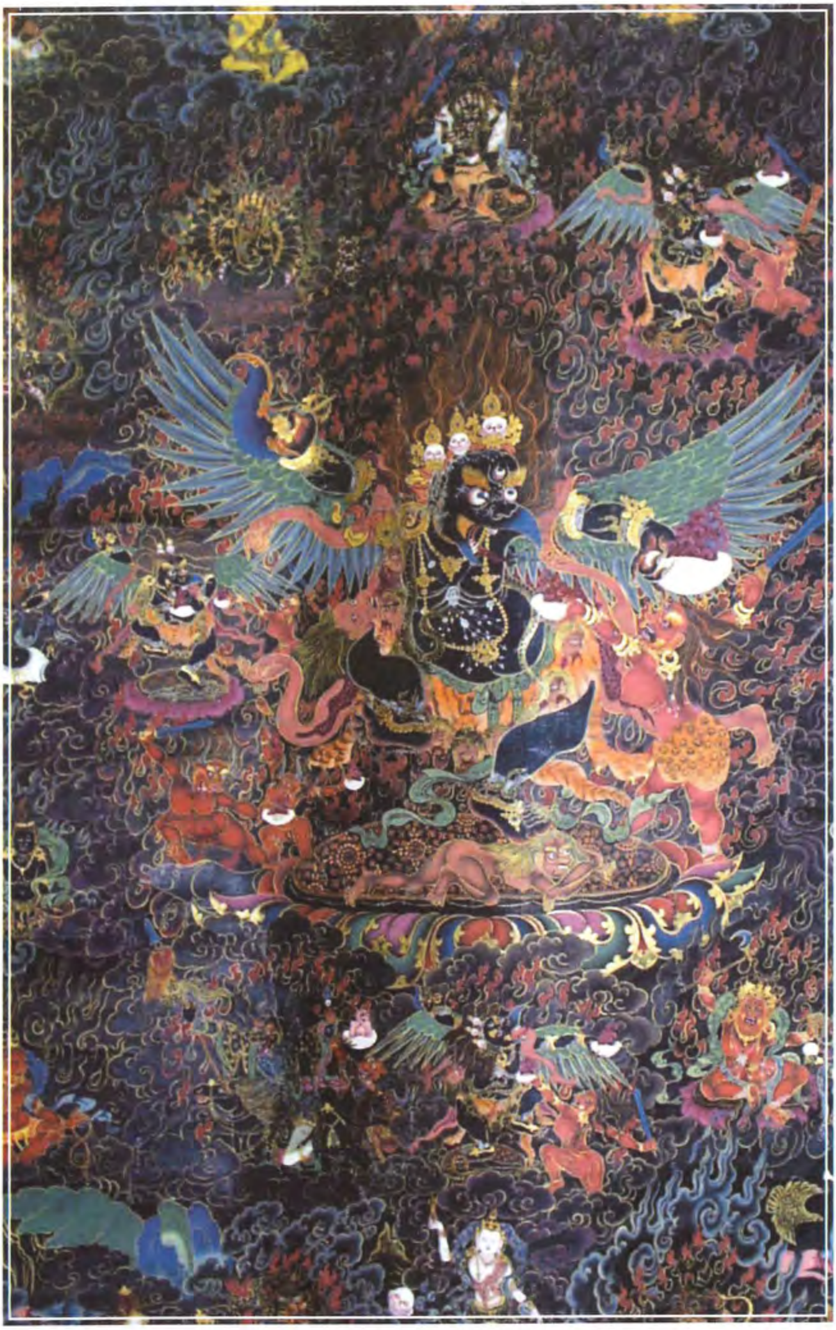


Fig. 55 Applique and embroidered *thangka* of Legön Jarog Dongchen (a form of the protective deity Mahākāla or Yeshe Gönpo). Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 56 The old Royal Palace in Leh, the capital of Ladakh. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 57 The old Royal Palace of Shelkar. Photo: Yonten Dargye

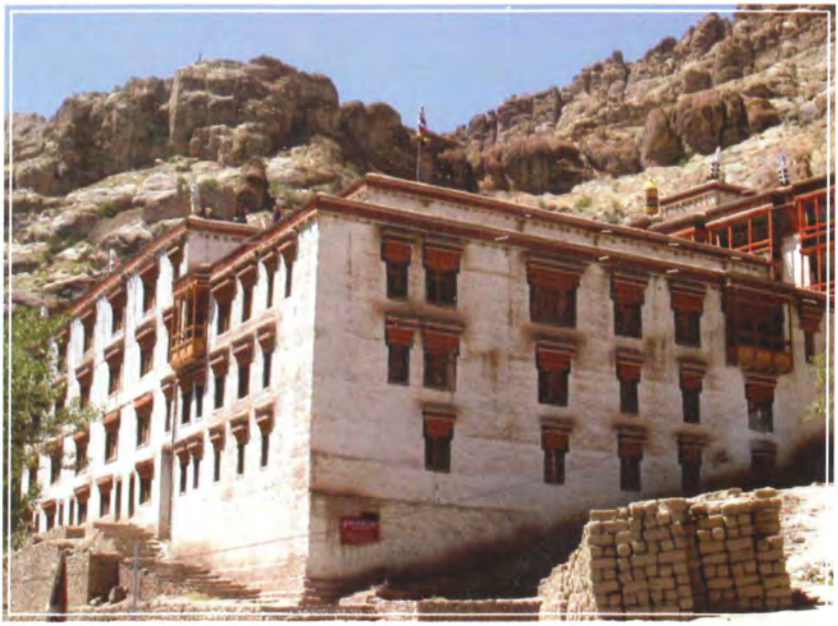


Fig. 58 Hemis Monastery. It was used as the Royal Seat prior to its transformation to a Monastery. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 59 Thegchog Monastery today known as Chimde belonging to Drukpa Kagyud Order. Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 60 Taktshang Repa Ngawang Gyamtsho (1574–1651) kept at Thegchog Monastery.
Photo: Yonten Dargye



Fig. 61 Rear view of Thiktse Monastery with Tsangpo river in the foreground. Photo: John Johnston



Fig. 62 Landscape of Ladakh. Photo: John Johnston

his head declaring that Jamgön now was his Guru (teacher). Jamgön further taught him how to meditate upon Avalokiteśvara and he understood it instantly. When Jamgön gave him blessing pills, he took them without any hesitation and went away having gained unwavering faith in Jamgön.

Thereafter, Jamgön and his entourage left to see Phullahari towards the north. In the middle of the city was a river which they crossed by boat, and they then followed a track, amidst beautiful meadows, trees and bushes with blossoming flowers. While on their way, they heard a thigh bone trumpet being blown melodiously at the site which they were going to visit. Jamgön thought to himself, "There must be a Tibetan ascetic up there, and I have not brought any present for him." But when they arrived they could find no trace of any other human being, let alone an ascetic, and everyone was taken by surprise. This was an extraordinary sign indicating a joyful reception to them by yogic masters who had formerly resided there.

Phullahari was the monastic seat where the great master Śrī Jñānasiddhi [= dPal gyi Ye-shes dngos-grub = Nāropa] had attained enlightenment. Although it formerly thrived as a very prominent monastery, now only remnants of ruins were to be found. Jamgön went to the meditation cave of Nāropa, which was square in shape and one fathom in diameter with a stone lid, and inside there was a mud-plastered floor. Just seeing the cave alone was captivating enough and the memory of Nāropa was born in him, and he recited many prayers.

It was said that there were about seven foot-step prints allegedly made by Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (1012–1097), when he retreated backwards not daring to show his back to Nāropa, but others had covered these prints with mud and stones and so they could not see them while making their way back to their campsite. Nevertheless, they were able to see one foot-print which was shown to them by a cow-herder. It was said that there were many wondrous sacred sites in the area, but they were unable to see them since there was no one to guide them. Near a small village inhabited by Brahmins, there was a small square-shaped lake

called Lhamoi Latsho (lHa-mo'i bla-mtsho) from which, it was said, that saffron (*gur gum* i.e. crocus sativus) springs forth. In front of this lake was a garden of saffron plants with hollow stems from which sprung a profusion of blooming, scented flowers. Jamgön brought a saffron bulb from there to Bhutan and it was planted and grown. Subsequently, the plant was said to have been eaten by insects since it was not given adequate care and protection.

Jamgön and his party stayed nine days in the big city of Kashmir. Upon his return, he made a detailed report of what he had seen during the course of his pilgrimage including the landscape, climate, people, pilgrimage sites, houses, code of conduct, commerce, market place, and size of the population, which was said earlier to be 360,000 and now was closer to 370,000 due to the influx of immigrants from outside. After Jamgön's return to Bhutan, when anyone asked him about his visit to Kashmir he would reminisce with great pleasure, and he even made paintings of the landscape of Kashmir at his residence at Kila [at Seula Chökhor Dorjeden].

The King's representative, Hakamma (Ha-kam-ma) offered Jamgön and his party excellent provisions for their return journey to Leh. Returning, they arrived at a plain where they made camp for the night. They looked for water all over, but could not find any. Jamgön made a water-producing ritual, whereupon water gushed forth. Again, on another occasion, when they were looking for firewood, a beautiful woman appeared from nowhere and offered a lapful of firewood, which was enough for preparing meals both that evening and the following morning.

They arrived at a village called Thongdrö (mThong-brod) where many people paid homage to Jamgön, and served Jamgön and his entourage well. The people there lamented and requested Jamgön: "O Lama, in this place, one of our ancestors in former times had erected a *chörten*. Until it fell down, we had a good harvest, but now this *chörten* is in ruins and many inauspicious signs have occurred in our region. So we pray that you repair it." Jamgön accordingly repaired the *chörten*

and consecrated it. It was said that auspicious signs appeared all by themselves and that henceforth the people lived more comfortable lives than in earlier times.

The next stop on the journey brought them to a town called Henbab (Hen-'bab). There a Brahmin's son was ill because he was possessed by an evil spirit. The parents brought the boy to Jamgön who administered mantric water and sacramental substance and so the boy was relieved of his illness. They continued on via Pelchongkhar (dPal-skyong-mkhar) and arrived at the summit of Kharlatse pass. There a blind woman with great devotion bowed down to Jamgön's feet and prayed. Immediately, her sight was restored, and everyone was taken by surprise.

After they had arrived at one vast steppe-like plain, one of Jamgön's attendants, Ngawang Trashi (Ngag-dbang bkra-shis) died from small-pox and two monks who had been helping him also caught the disease. Not recovering, they were quarantined in a cave called Gyal (rGyal) while Jamgön and his attendants stayed in seclusion until the epidemic subsided. At that time, the King of Ladakh happened to visit the area with his army, and when he was about to return from this trip, he heard that Jamgön was on his way back from his pilgrimage and was passing by along the same route. The King sent a messenger with excellent provisions to Jamgön.

A man called Aku Gyalpo invited Jamgön and his attendants with great devotion and served them well. Aku Gyalpo said: "I have many daughters, but I have no son and therefore, please grant me blessing for procuring a son." Jamgön gave him the longevity empowerment one hundred times. After one year, Aku Gyalpo came and offered thanksgiving to Jamgön for the son he now had.

At that time, an old yogi heretic who was attracted by Jamgön's fame came to meet him. A special faith developed in him and he made many prostrations requesting Jamgön to guide him to the path of Buddhist practice. Jamgön had no time to give detailed teachings since he had to set off again on his journey back to Ladakh. But still he gave the yogi the essential teachings which include the benefit of taking refuge in the

Triple Gem, the defects of saṃsara, cause and effect, meditative object of prostration and so forṭh. Subsequently, that man became a very famous yogi and later on even came to Ladakh to see Jámgön.

They arrived at Achig Chökhor (i.e. Alchi)[203] which had been founded by lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (lo-tsā-ba Rin-chen bzang-po; 958-1051)[204] and which had one storey high images of each of the Buddhas of the Three Times. The wall paịntings depicted one thousand Buddhas, and printed on the robe of each Buddha were one thousand Buddhas, and on the walls of the corridors, there were also one thousand Buddhas. Then they came to Babgoikha (Babs-sgo'i mkhar),[205] where they saw a temple which contained the Seven Buddhas (Sangs-rgyas Rab-bdun)[206] installed upon one single seat with the main statue being a two storey high Buddha Maitreya.

They finally arrived back at Takna Gönpa where Jamgön stayed for some days and then went to the palace of Leh, where he was again received with great honour by the King. As per the King's command, Jamgön thereafter went to Shelkar Palace and practised longevity sādhana for the King and the Royal Family, and Maṇifested great powers, so that the holy water vase overflowed of its own accord. The King was fully confirmed in his faith together with his ministers.

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203 A-cig chos-'khor is today commonly known as Alchi. It is located west of Leh. This temple is one of the largest and most famous temples built by Lo-tsa-va Rin-chen bzang-po.

204 He was a great translator, writer and builder of temples and was universally acknowledged as the founder of the New Tantras (i.e. the Later Spread of the Doctrine or *bsTan pa phyi dar*), and brought a period of great reformation and renaissance to Buddhism in Tibet in the 10th and 11th century.

205 Babs-'go'i mkhar, today commonly known by Ba-sgo, is located 42 kms west of Leh. The castle is known as Ba-sgo Rab-brtan lHa-rtse-mkhar. It was built by La-dvags king 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal and his son Seng-ge rnam-rgyal. The latter in commemoration of his father erected as the principal image a "Golden Maitreya," a copper-gilt image, two storeys in height.

206 Sangs-rgyas rab-bdun or Seven Buddhas who have already appeared in this world according to the Theravada tradition: rNam-gzigs (Vipaśyin), 2. gTsug-gtor-can (Śikhī), 3. Thams-cad skyobs (Viśvabhuk), 4. 'Khor-ba-'jig (Krakuṭsunda), 5. gSer-thub (Kanakamuni), 6. 'Od-srung (Kāśyapa), 7. Thub-pa (Śakyamuni).

5. Religious Rituals and Pilgrimage

Gradually, Jamgön became renowned, and gave Drukpa Kagyud teachings to many of the population including the King and his ministers. On the request of the King and his ministers, Jamgön conducted an initiation ceremony which consisted in bestowing empowerments and delivering different religious instructions. During the construction of a house for Kalön Sönam Lhündrub, a scarcity of rain prevailed, and it was impossible to dig into the earth. They needed rain to soften it, so his wife Numo Trashima (Nu-mo bKra-shis-ma) came into the presence of Jamgön with tea and requested: "O Lama, although we are trying to build a house, since the sky is cloudless, the earth is very hard to dig, please assist us to produce rain." Without replying, he performed the ritual and immediately a huge shower of rain fell.

On another occasion, she again came into his presence, serving him tea and entreated: "The bricks will become loose, therefore, please again help us and this time stop the rain." Immediately, Jamgön stopped the pouring rain. He produced and stopped rain on request on many occasions, and his mastery in controlling the flow of rain was such that it was as if the rain was curled around his fingertips (*phyag mdzub la dkres pa ltar*).

Once, a sister of Kalön was possessed by a spirit. Drigungpa and Sakyapa lamas, lamas of Hemis Dung, and Gelukpa lamas were all invited and performed various rituals, only to be unable to control the spirit. Jamgön was now invited and he uttered mantric spells (*ljags sngags*) followed by a ransom ritual that relieved her from the spirit. Likewise, those people who still had not recovered from illness now asked for Jamgön's blessing, and they too were relieved.

By then, Jamgön had received a reply from Druk Rabgye, the 8th Desi of Bhutan to a letter he had written earlier, requesting permission to return to Bhutan. Reading it, he found that he was allowed to return if he had successfully completed his mission in Ladakh as stipulated in the letter: "You may come back if it is in accordance with the wishes of the King and ministers and if your obligations are fulfilled."

He showed the letter to the King and requested that he be allowed to return to Bhutan. The King with many words of respect however requested: "O Lama Rinpoche, please have mercy on us, the King, ministers and the people of Ladakh and remain here." The King pleaded with him strongly and Jamgön, unable to reject the wish of the King, for the time being had to remain in Ladakh.

Still, Jamgön repeatedly submitted requests to the King to be allowed to return to Bhutan, and in particular he stated that he had an old mother and he was anxious about her health, and he said: "It would not be proper to disappoint my parents, who had given birth to my mind and body, this time I really must go." This time, the King and ministers could not refuse Jamgön's request. They reluctantly gave their consent for his return to Bhutan. However, Lönchen Künga who possessed a good judgement proposed:

> If we do not fulfil the Lama's wish, our practice of the Dharma will be meaningless. On the other hand, if we do not fulfil the wish of the King, this also would not be proper, so if you by all means want to go, I at least request you to stay this year for the benefit of King and people, then after that there is no way that we can refuse your wish.

The proposal was discussed, and both the King and Jamgön accepted this condition and the latter remained in Ladakh for one more year.

During the course of the year, the King learnt more about the prevailing relations that had prevailed between Bhutan and Ladakh during the time of King Senge Namgyal and *zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal. Jamgön submitted a request to the King:

> In former times, there existed a close patron-priest relationship between Zhabdrung and your great grandfather Senge Namgyal, during which time your Uncle Gyalpo Tenzin (rGyal-po bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu) came to Bhutan and served as Dzongpön of Wangdü Phodrang. He rendered great service to the teachings of Buddhism, and I now request you, too, to send one of your brothers to Bhutan. If you kindly allow this, it would be greatly beneficial to Buddhism.

The King agreed, and it was decided that his younger brother Ngawang Tenzin Norbu should go to Bhutan. However, there was great anxiety

and worry among the King and the ministers that the journey to Bhutan would be risky, due to the lingering conflict between Bhutan and Tibet. The King hesitated to agree to his brother's departure, but Jamgön reassured him, predicting that all would go well on the journey and giving his personal guarantee. To ensure this, before Ngawang Tenzin Norbu and his entourage left, Jamgön presented the royal Ladakhi prince with a protective amulet, with sacramental substances, presents that would ensure their safe journey. He also issued a command to the protective deity, entreating them to help making the journey safe. The Royal party then set off and subsequently reached Bhutan without having encountered any obstacles whatsoever on the way. Ngawang Tenzin Norbu served as a Lopön in the Central Monastic Body. He later became the 6th Chila of Rinpung Dzong in Paro and eventually rose to become the 8th Je Khenpo of Bhutan (rg.1738–44).[207]

Jamgön decided again to undertake a pilgrimage trip, this time to Zangskar (Zangs-dkar), where Nāropa formerly had accomplished the recitation of the seven-syllable mantra of Saṃvara 100,000 times. Once when they had lost their track, two pigeons surprisingly appeared and guided them for the length of a day's journey. Finally, they arrived at Patumkhar (dPa'-gtum-mkhar), the palace of the King of Zangskar, where they were given a very warm welcome by the Queen and Princes, who served them with high veneration. As requested by the royal family members, Jamgön conducted rituals meant to dispel obstructing spirits and bestowed longevity empowerment upon the King, royal family members and ministers. He received, in return, a considerable amount of offerings including land to be used as monastic estate which he

207 Born in 1689 (*sa sbrul*) into the royal family of La-dvags, he arrived in Bhutan presumably when he was around age 22. He joined the monastic body under the guidance of Byams-mgon, and received the monk's ordination from the 5th rJe mKhan-po bZod-pa 'phrin-las. Attending upon Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan, the 1st incarnation of Zhabs-drung's son *rgyal-sras* 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje, he mastered both the theoretical and practical aspects of the Buddhist teachings. After serving as *sPyi bla* or Provincial Governor of Rin-pung in sPa-ro, he was enthroned as the 8th rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan at the age of 50 in 1738 and reigned for 6 years. He retired from the post in 1743, and died at the age of 58 in 1746. See *LCB–II* 144a4–b3; *MLNK* 1984: 288.

immediately presented to the Takrimo Gönpa (sTag-ri-mo).[208]

On the way to the cave of Nāropa, they passed under a Kanishka Chörten[209] and arrived at the cemetery of Deden (bDe-ldan)[210] which had been mentioned in the Pema Thangyig. The *chörten* was made purely of precious cast metal called *dzikshim*[211] with a measure of four elbows in height. The ground in front of the *chörten* was paved with white stone, and the local people called this area the "Fire of the Cemetery" or *Durme*, and it was said that one could see burning flames coming up through the paving stones. They spent that night there and the next day while proceeding along the mountainside they came to a deep cave, inside which it was said there was a "soul stone" of the Twelve Female Protectors[212] having the shape of a protruding breast. Thereafter, they arrived at the meditation cave of Nāropa. Inside they found a Drukpa

208 It is a 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud monastery in Zangs-dkar and served as a branch monastery of sTag-na Monastery in La-dvags.

209 It is believed that Nāropa's mortal remains were preserved in this *stūpa*. Kanishka/ Kanika is a generic description for any *stūpa* erected by Kanishka, a Kushan ruler in the 2nd century.

210 The 'bDe-ldan' cemetery is regarded as one of the eight great cemeteries in the Buddhist tradition. It can still be seen today.

211 The *li ma* alloy cast metal denoted *dznyee ksim* (var. *ji / rdzi / zi khyim*; origin unclear, corrupt for? *kamsa*) is found in a variety of forms. So-called pure *rdzi ksim* is obtained from the earth and resembles natural bronze. The colour is dark and the metal itself is of fine quality. Artificial *dznyee ksim* is an alloy mixed with gold, silver and other precious metals in varying degrees. Lo Bue argues that artificial *zi khyim* = *li khra* is nothing but brass and natural *zi khyim* = *li dmar* is copper; see Lo Bue in Oddy and Zwalf 1991: 41–44. For further details on *li ma*; cf. *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* 1955–56 based upon Kar-ma Rang-byung rdo-rje's *Rin po che sna tshogs kyi brtag thabs* and De'u-dmar's *Rig pa bzo yi gnas la 'dod rgur sgyur ba 'od kyi snang brnyan.*

212 The Twelve Dharma Protectors or the twelve sister-protectors of Tibet who have promised to protect the Buddha Dharma, belonging to the class of mother tantra are:

1. rDo-rje Kun-grags-ma
2. rDo-rje gYa'-ma-skyong
3. rDo-rje Kun-bzang-ma
4. rDo-rje Gegs-kyi-gtso
5. rDo-rje sPyan-gcig-ma
6. rDo-rje dPal-gyi-yum
7. rDo-rje Drag-po-rgyal
8. rDo-rje Klu-mo-dkar-mo
9. rDo-rje Bod-khams-skyong
10. rDo-rje sMan-gchig-ma
11. rDo-rje g.Yar-mo-sel
12. rDo-rje gYu-sgron-ma

ascetic from Zangskar practising meditation, and he received Jamgön and his party.

On the way back, Jamgön and his party again stopped at the Dedän Cemetery for one night. They also visited a sacred site called Jomo Chenchigma (Jo-mo sPyan-gcig-ma),[213]and nearby there was a place occupied by a local *genyen*-spirit considered to be vicious towards Buddhism. At the close of their journey, while negotiating steep rocky terrain, the horse once almost fell off the cliff, but his attendant Ngawang Trashi managed to grasp the headgear of the horse, and both Jamgön and horse remained unharmed. They finally arrived at Leh Palace where Jamgön was received with the same honours as before.

Once, the people assembled at Ngor Gönpa [Ngor dgon-pa][214] in order to witness the annual festival dedicated to local oracle, Pholha Nagpo (Pho-lha nag-po). Jamgön wondered how the journey back to Bhutan would be, and he consulted Pholha Ngapo for a prediction concerning the outcome. The prediction he received indicated:

> The first attempt showed that a voyage could be made; the second attempt indicated that he could make a journey in the present year if he proceeded immediately; and that it would be impossible in the following years.

Following this prediction, preparations were made for departure. The King showed Jamgön all the sacred religious objects (nang rten) enshrined in his palace including the wonderful tooth of Śariputra, and three images of Āvalokiteśvara in different forms which came out from the ribs of the 1st Gyalwang Je Künga Penjor (rGyal-dbang Kun-dga' dpal-'byor) during his cremation, a statue of Vajrayoginī with bone ornaments which had come forth from the cremated remains of künkhyen Pemakarpo, and also a tooth relic of drubchen Thangtong Gyalpo.

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213 One of the Twelve Dharma Protectors or the twelve sister-protectors of Tibet who have promised to protect the Buddha Dharma.

214 Ngor dgon-pa, today known as Ma-mtho dgon-pa, is situated *ca.* 26 kms south-east of Leh on the opposite bank of the River Senge Tsangpo. It was founded by a Lama gDung-pa rdo-rje. It belongs to the Sakya Order.

Jamgön used his remaining time guiding the people of Ladakh and Kashmir including the royal family members along the path of Buddhist practice. In a farewell ceremony, the King offered him nine sets of nine items (dgu tshan dgu dang brgya 'bul lnga), and presented him with monastic estates such as Barden Gönpa ('Bar-ldan dgon-pa),[215] Chözhi Dungring (Chos gzhis Dung-ring), twenty-three tax-paying households and the mountain forest lands of Tagnai Luwang (sTag-sna'i klu-dbang); he also offered him the drinking water-reservoirs of the areas of Shingri (Shing-ri), Mangthröphu (Mang-khrod-phug) and of Lönpoi Churang Shigpa (Blon-po'i Chu-rang gshig-pa) given as revenue-yielding property to Takna Gönpa. The King again confirmed that the territories and settlements which earlier had been held by *chöje* Mukzinpa (Chos-rje rMug [= sMon or Mon]-'dzin-pa, d. 1624)[216] would now be held by Jamgön. All these presentations were said to have been issued in a written document with seal.

The King now vowed to restore the Känjur to the best of his ability, to recite the Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti 20,000 times yearly, to carry out other virtuous activities as much as possible, and also vowed not to hunt wild animals any more. Similarly, Lönpo Künga offered Jamgön many presents and longevity prayers. He vowed to recite the 100-Syllable Mantra of Purification [of Vajrasattva] (*Yig-brgya*) 100,000 times each year, to make 10,000 *tsha tshas*, to conduct a yearly one-month meditative retreat and to carry out regular prayers. Kalön Sönam Lhündrub vowed to erect 100,000 *tsha tshas* each year, and to refrain

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215 'Bar-ldan dgon-pa in Zangskar is the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud monastery and is a branch monastery of sTag-sna monastery in La-dvags. sTag-sna Rin-po-che is the present incumbent of the monastery.

216 It is recorded that he was the first? 'Brug-pa monk representative sent to the La-dvags court apparently as substitute for Zhabs-drung (who decided to go the Bhutan) on the invitation of King Seng-ge rnam-rgyal. Unlike Byams-mgon Ngag-dbang rgyal-mtshan, he is still largely an unidentified and unknown figure in the history of the 'Brug-pa school and in Bhutan, whereas in La-dvags he is recognized as the monk representative who built the first Southern 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud Monastery at sTag-sna, which later mainly served as the seat of the future lHo 'Brug or Bhutanese representatives. He spent most of his life at sTag-sna where he finally passed away in 1624. The site where he was cremated as well as his ossuary is still to be seen at the entrance way to sTag-sna Monastery. See Fig. 49

from killing birds. Lönpo Phüntsho vowed to erect one thousand *tsha tshas* a year and Rinchen Sherab vowed to recite the *maṇi*-mantra 1000 times daily and to write *Vajracchedika* (*rDo rje gcod pa*) once yearly. Sönam Jorpa, too, promised to make 1000 *tsha tshas* each year. All the rest of those present made similar vows to devote themselves to virtuous activity and made offerings, each in accordance with what they could afford.[217]

6 Journey Back to Bhutan

Following the conclusion of the farewell ceremony, Jamgön and his party travelled to Hemis accompanied by the King and ministers. Dung Rinpoche here offered all best gifts and service including presents such as horses to Jamgön. The King and ministers expressed their wish to accompany Jamgön for a few days on the journey. Accordingly, Jamgön and his entourage set off accompanied by a host of attendants including the King, ministers and Dung Rinpoche.

After travelling for five days from Ladakh, they arrived at a sacred site where a self-created Āvalokiteśvara image was found. Here Jamgön told the King and ministers to take leave, and with great sadness bade them farewell: they entreated Jamgön to continue to look upon them compassionately in all their successive life-times. Jamgön recited prayers for them and then blessed each of them by placing his hand on their heads. The King, ministers including Dung Rinpoche and attendants remained behind while Jamgön and his entourage set out on their journey back to Bhutan.

Jamgön and his party arrived at a place where they were rendered the best service and respect by one called Ngud Lama (rNgud bla-ma), the same lama they had met six years earlier while on their way to Ladakh. Travelling further, they encountered an extremely villainous Mongolian robber (*sog po rtsing hral can*); he forcibly tied a robe around the neck of one of the attendants in an attempt to rob him of his possessions;

217 See *MLNK* 1984: 287.

at that moment the other attendants were taken aback and completely at a loss, not knowing what to do. Instantly Jamgön dismounted and declared: "There is a truce (*ching 'jags*) between Bhutan and Tibet, why are you carrying out such a despicable act?" The robber, unable to withstand the force of Jamgön's glaring disapproval, let the attendant free.

They arrived at Puri (sPu-ri), said to be a place for the mining of precious metals. They discovered that the local people were receiving *mo*-divination from a person who was possessed by a deity. Jamgön too received a prediction, as follows:

> You are a Drukpa Lama and I am also a deity of Drukpa; if you proceed immediately this time you will able to make your return, [but if you delay] your journey will be obstructed.

The Gang [= sGar-]thog Pönpo (sGang-thog dpon-po) had heard about Jamgön's arrival and this time also, he invited him to his house where he provided all possible service and paid his respects to Jamgön and his entourage. Then they went on to Nyenpori Dzong, where the Dorzin Tenzin Chöpel (bsTan-'dzin chos-'phel) received them warmly and rendered them good service. They rested there for seven days and during their stay they visited sacred mountain sites in the vicinity.

They spent a night at Zuthrulphug (rDzu-'phrul-phug). Recollecting the inconceivable devotion and faith he harboured for *jetsün* Milarepa, Jamgön here made many prayers. He paid a visit to the mountain site, particularly to see the footprints of Sugata which were visible on a rock known as "Immutable Nail" (*mi 'gyur ba'i gzer*) located in the four directions of Kailash. He made a copy of one footprint on a piece of cloth, making the imprint with the help of saffron water. The biographer claims that he had himself seen this later. Then they returned to the seat of Dorzin where they were served with great respect.

Jamgön and his party continued their journey. On the way, they were served and honoured by both Lowo Lama and the Depa (i.e. the Lama and ruler of Mustang), and as they gradually travelled onwards, they passed the scenic sights of Tsibri (rTsibs-ri), Zurphud (Zur-phug)

and Dingri (Ding-ri). When they halted overnight at the upper part of Samthang (Sram-thang), two good horses were taken away by robbers in the night. Having noticed their disappearance, the attendants tried to look for them by following their hoof-prints, but in vain. Jamgön, on learning about this, kept quiet for sometime in contemplation; afterwards a clear neighing sound was heard from a distant pass. Hearing it, the attendants became very happy, and the horses suddenly appeared galloping, completely exhausted and panting heavily, and everyone was taken by surprise. Travelling further, they finally arrived at Phag-ri on the Twentieth Day of the Eight Month of the Iron-Hare Year, corresponding to 1711.

At that point, there was no treaty between Bhutan and Tibet and the relationship between them was tense. An Oirad Mongol (i.e a Mongolian from the western, Altai region) reported Jamgön's arrival to the authorities, and the Tibetan Government immediately sent a decree which read: "Since the younger Prince of the King of Ladakh [i.e Tenzin Norbu] has already left for Bhutan, stop his court-priest Jamgön from going to Bhutan."

The Governor of Phagri received a strongly worded decree from his Government. Jamgön was not permitted to move further on from there and was put under strict detention in one of the Dzongs. Due to the contaminated water at this place, he became severely ill, his entire body was swollen, and he was unable to take his meals. However, he never stopped his devotions, and the local people were fascinated by him. Some lamas, including the incarnation of Drubpai Wangchuk Pel Künga Legpa (Grub-pa'i dbang-phyug dpal Kun-dga' legs-pa; i.e. Drukpa Künley), are recorded as having expressed their wish to invite Jamgön to their respective monastic seats. In the Tibetan Government, there was a far-sighted *dapön* (*mda' dpon*, brigadier) named Samlingpa (bSam-gling-pa). Hearing of Jamgön's repute, out of devotion and deeming that the well-being of the Buddhist teaching and living beings of Bhutan and Tibet might be adversely affected if Jamgön was in danger of losing his life, the Dapön immediately appointed a physician to treat Jamgön's illness. At that time, Jamgön also met with a *tertön* called Dorje Drolö

(rDo-rje Gro-lod) who was then returning from Bhutan. Exchanging scarves, they paid homage to each other.

One day, the Phagri Governor escorted by his attendants, came to search Jamgön's belongings, at which point Jamgön thought to himself that it did not matter if most of the other things were confiscated, but it would not be a good thing if they come to know about the letter sent by the King of Ladakh to the government of Bhutan. With this in mind, he prayed to the protective deity. The Tibetans tried unsuccessfully to open the box containing the letter. Jamgön said: "How could I have so many valuables with me? (*de tsam rang la gtos pa ci yod*)." He opened the box and showed it to them, but they did not see the letter and left.

Jamgön was forced to stay in prison for eight months, during which he not only underwent great hardship himself but also lost some of his horses and other domestic animals which perished from hunger; his circumstances forced him to exchange some good horses for tea; and some of his personal belongings were confiscated by the Tibetan Governor. He thought that he must send his remaining belongings to the ruler in Bhutan before they, too, were all taken away by the Tibetan Governor, and he dispatched them secretly with a letter which read:

> My work, the work of an old man, has now been completed; for me it doesn't matter whether I die or live, but concerning the Prince of the King of Ladakh, please take good care of him since he is needed for the benefit of the Buddhist teaching and for the living beings in Bhutan.[218]

Jamgön received a reply to his letter from Gyalzang (rGyal-bzang), the Drönyer (Steward) of Paro, which read:

> We are unbearably shocked at hearing that you are in such a bad situation; since the Tibetan dzongs are low storeyed, we pray that you may escape secretly at night with the aid of a long ladder placed against the wall outside the dzong.[219]

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218 *JGNT–II* 169a4–5: *nga mi rgan gyi bya ni byas tshar / shi gson ci byed kyang bla yi / la dvags rgyal sras de yin na bstan lar dgos pa yod pas mgo 'dren yang dag mdzad pa mkhyen.*

219 *JGNT–II* 169a6–b1.

On receiving the letter, Jamgön wrote a reply which read:

> It is not proper to create more trouble between Bhutan and Tibet for the sake of me alone; it's better to die than to live harming sentient beings.

He therefore did not agree to the course of action the Drönyer had suggested in his letter. However, although there was still no proper peace settlement, Jamgön was, for the time being, permitted by the Tibetan Government to proceed as far as Shomo (Sho-mo, Bro-mo?).[220]

During this time, back in Amorimu, Jamgön's old mother was yearning for her son like a thirsty man longing for water. She is recorded to have said, "O son Chöje Rinpoche, have mercy on me, your old mother." She had reached the age of 87. "Now I don't know if I can still live in this world; I really have to accomplish virtuous deeds in accordance with what I can afford," she thought. Arranging all the necessities, she sent them to the monastic community at Punakha to be used for the performance of many thousand-fold rituals of Vajra-Akṣobhya in order to purify non-virtuous acts. For twelve days, an extensive feast of prayers was conducted and rich service rendered to the monastic community.

Subsequently, she decided to travel to Punakha in order to make offerings in person to the temples and to the successive ruling hierarchs; on the way she fell from her horse and her head was wounded. Bearing the pain, she arrived at Punakha, and visited all the outer and inner temples where she made prayers. She then returned to her home where she became severely ill. All family members were worried and medical treatment was given and rituals were made for her well-being. Her son Chung Rinpoche, Ngawang Pekar arrived and performed different rituals such as long-life prayer. He consoled his mother by way of religious discourse. However ill she was, she would never let go of her rosary, and she kept on making *maṇi*-prayers incessantly.

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220 Name of a place in Phag-ri region or rather Sho-mo in gNyal of southern lHo-kha.

One day, while resting against her pillow, she raised herself up from her bed and, facing towards her pillow, said with a loud voice: "*Om maṇi padme hung*, *chöje* Penjor please help! (*chos rje dpal 'byor mkhyen*!" At that moment, the rosary slipped from her hand while her breathing ceased. Ngawang Pekar immediately performed, in an extensive way, the transference of her consciousness (*'pho ba*) and prayers to guide her, followed by funeral service including purification rites.

Back in Phagri, Jamgön had a vision in which his mother had come to meet him out of sheer endless love. Speaking respectfully, she had said:

> O Chöje Rinpoche, I have been waiting for you hoping that you would come; since you have not come, I have been yearning so long and have come here to meet you.

Jamgön thought, "Looking at the way she appeared in my vision, it seems that my mother is no longer alive." He recollected the kindness of his mother and made a dedication prayer as well as merit transference to ensure that his mother would receive a proper rebirth.

Chapter VII

OBEDIENT SERVANT
A BRIEF TEMPORAL ASSIGNMENT

1. Arrival in Bhutan and Becoming Paro Pönlop or *Chila*

The Great Treasurer (*phyag mdzod*) of Sakya mediated Jamgön's release from detention in Phagri; and thereafter Jamgön and his attendants were finally allowed to proceed to Bhutan. They arrived at Rinpung Dzong in Paro in the Third Month of the Water-Dragon Year, corresponding to 1712. All the religious dignitaries including the Chila and crowds of people welcomed him amid a *zhugdrel* feast. Jamgön rested for seven days. At that time, all the areas of western Bhutan were visited by a severe drought and people were suffering from the lingering dearth of rain; immediately after Jamgön had arrived, a huge shower fell. The people with one voice exclaimed: "May Chöje Rinpoche have mercy! What a great blessing it is!" Following this, he bestowed empowerment of the Longevity of Hayagrīva upon his devotees in Paro.

Jamgön and his attendants subsequently proceeded to Thimphu and arrived at Trashichödzong where he was received by many followers and former spiritual friends. In the eight-pillared hall, he met the 8th Desi

Druk Rabgye (1707–1719) and presented to him many gifts including precious metals such as gold, silver, coral, etc., tea and cloth, amidst an elaborate *zhugdrel* ceremony. Everyone was surprised with the richness of the gifts. Although most of the things had been confiscated in Phagri while he was in prison and some other things had already been sent ahead of him to the government at an earlier time, still he had been able to offer so much. He became famous for being the first lama ever to have come back from the Ngari region with such a huge amount of presents. To the monk community, he presented silver, gold, and silk brocade including the robe which was earlier presented to him when leaving for Ladakh by Ngawang Küinga Gyaltshen.

Though Jamgön desired to resign from secular responsibilities, the government did not allow him to do so. During his long absence, not only had his own mother passed away without their reunion, but also many of his friends with whom he had spiritual connections had also died while others of them had gone for retreat. Now, he only had one thing in his mind, and that was to lead a secluded life devoted to meditation. He went to a place called Bardzong (Bar-rdzong) where he remained in strict meditation. After the completion of his retreat, he went to Punakha. Even there, he continued his meditative practice. At that time, there was a widespread occurrence of disease in the area and even the monks including Zöpa Thinley (bZod-pa 'phrin-las), the 5th Je Khenpo (1707–24)[221] had to seek a secluded place to avoid being affected. It was the time of the Dromchö in Punakha,[222] and the monks still not affected by the epidemic carried out Maṇḍala drawings, performed the dances,

221 Born in 1645 at Lug-chu-sgang in sPa-gro Dol-steng, he entered into monkhood at the age of 13. He received teachings mainly from Pad-dkar 'byung-gnas, bSod-nams 'od-zer and others and became an accomplished master. He became tutor to *rgyal sras* Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1689–1713) and subsequently came to the throne of rJe mKhan-po at the age of 63. He ruled as the 5th rJe mKhan-po for 17 years. He passed away at the age of 85, in 1729. Cf. *LCB–II*: 142a5–143a1.

222 sPu-ṇa sGrom-mchod [= sGrub-mchod [= -chen]] falls in the first month of the Bhutanese calendar. It was first introduced by Zhabs-drung to celebrate his triumph over the second Tibetan-Mongol allied invasion of Bhutan in 1649 with grand offerings and rites to protective deities. Since then it had been celebrated yearly in the first month of the Bhutanese calendar. Cf. *LCB–I* 44b6–45a5; see also Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 324–25.

and made prayer offerings. In fact, the responsibility for the entire Dromchö ceremony had been entrusted to Jamgön, who throughout this period remained unaffected by the scourge and he carried out this ceremony in a perfect manner.

While Jamgön was preparing powders [for making a Sand Maṇḍala] *lopön* Ngawang Tshering had a dream in which he saw the Maṇḍala fall apart and, thinking that this was a bad omen, he reported it to Jamgön who said: "There is a danger that hindrances might come to us, we should be careful!" The following day, clouds of butterflies – countless, like dust particles in the sunlight – unexpectedly hovered above and gathered immediately over the Maṇḍala. No one knew what to do. At that very moment, Jamgön went into meditation, whereupon the butterflies disappeared without a trace. The epidemic gradually subsided, too, and the monks led by the Je Khenpo returned to Punakha.

The monk body headed by the Je Khenpo Zöpa Thinley arrived at their summer residence, Trashichödzong, from Punakha. Jamgön paid a visit to Ngawang Künga Gyaltshen at a time when the monk community was conducting longevity prayers for the latter who had just completed his three year retreat. The former offered the latter excellent gifts including pieces of gold. When autumn approached, they again left for Punakha, their permanent winter residence. In the presence of Ngawang Künga Gyaltshen, Jamgön received the initiation into the cycle of the five-deity Cakrasaṃvara according to the system of Vajra-Ghaṇṭāpāda and the four complete empowerments of the Sahajā Kuśali (*lhan skyes ku śa li*) cycle[223] and of the nine-deity Cakrasaṃvara related to the Development Stage (*utpattikrama*) of meditation within the Drukpa Kagyudpa School.

223 The cycle counts as one of the five so-called *sādhana* cycles (*sgrub thabs kyi skor lnga*) and goes back to *acāryā* Vajra-Ghaṇṭāpāda; cf. *bKa' brgyud dkar chag* in the Collected Writings (Vol. II) of the 2nd 'Brug-chen Rin-po-che Kun-dga' dpal-'byor.

In 1713, Ngawang Künga Gyaltshen[224] was assassinated. The biographer describes the natural environment to be gloomy, accompanied by many bad omens such as the occurrence of violent storms. From the Twentieth Day of the Third Month, corresponding to 1714, a violent earthquake is reported to have visited the area, with aftershocks continuing for about a month; in one day one could feel the tremors up to thirty times, with the result that many houses and huts collapsed. The Punakha Dzong also swayed back and forth and seemed in imminent danger of collapse, prompting the monk community including the Je Khenpo to move out of the Dzong and to seek shelter on the ground outside. All the people panicked and did not know what to do.

Wondering what would be the best means to repel the bad omens that had translated into earthquakes, Desi Druk Rabgye sought a timely solution by way of divination and received the following advice:

> Avoid the ten non-virtuous deeds and make the law of the land strict; religious practitioners must vigorously practice meditative approach and accomplishment (*sevasādhana*; *bsnyen sgrub*). In particular, it would be propitious if fire pūjās are conducted [in order to implement] the four [magic] karma-activities [according to Vajra-Bhairava enacted in order to revert the disasters],[225] only then the huge earthquake will subside and all bad omens gradually allay.[226]

The government accordingly carried out all the necessary rites of aversion (*bzlog*) implied in the divination, and the tremors gradually subsided as did other calamitous signs.

224 'Brug Rab-rgyas had dethroned Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan from the seat of the Zhabs-drung and forced him to stay at dBang-'dus Pho-brang. While at dBang-'dus, the Protocol Officer (*mgron gnyer*), known as sKag-rgyal, the ally of 'Brug Rab-rgyas, humiliated Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan in every possible way at the former's instigation. Sensing his life to be in danger, he attempted to flee, but he was captured and assassinated. Cf. *Druk Dron* 294–96.

225 The four [kind of enlightened] activities include: pacifying (*śānti, zhi ba*), increasing (*rgyas pa, puṣṭi*), magnetizing/overpowering (*dbang, vaśa*) and the wrathful or forceful (*drag po, abhicāra/raudracāra*).

226 See *JGNT–II* 175a2–3.



Fig. 63 Ngawang Künga Gyaltshen (1689–1713) from a wall painting at Punakha Dzong. Photo: Sonam Tobgay

The young Ngawang Chogley Namgyal (1708–1736)[227] had been recognized at Punakha as the spiritual and temporal head of Bhutan. In accordance with his wishes, Jamgön taught him the proportions (*thig rtsa*) of the Desheg Chörten Gyad (the Eight Sugata Stūpas). As requested, he also gave the complete instruction on how to draw a Pelpung Chörten (dPal-spungs mchod-rten). From that time onwards, Chogley Namgyal developed undivided faith in Jamgön. He was later to receive numerous teachings and initiations from him.

Jamgön had at this stage read the majority of sections of the Tenjur; he now made a divination in order to see whether his spiritual activities actually were beneficial to living beings. The divination read:

> *A Buddha on the Dharma throne,*
> *Leaves on the Bodhi tree blossoming,*
> *Guidance is made for a large number of beings,*
> *Therefore the sun of happiness will shine forth*
> *A religious person will ascend the throne,*
> *And the flag of fame will soar widely.*[228]

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227 Ngag-dbang phyogs-las rnam-rgyal, the Verbal Incarnation (*gsung sprul*) of Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal, commonly known as Phyogs-las sPrul-sku. He was born in 1708 at Nyi-gdugs-kha in Dar-dkar rDzong (Dagana). He was enthroned as the 1st verbal reincarnation in 1711, being invited from Dar-dkar-na by the 8th sDe-srid, 'Brug rab-rgyas. However, he could not take up the responsibility of spiritual and temporal authority due to the political situation in the country. During the time of the 8th sDe-srid, Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan, the incarnation of *rgyal sras* 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje was also born. The monastic body installed him as the spiritual and temporal head of Bhutan, a move that was disapproved of by sDe-srid Rab-rgyas. A civil war ensued between monk body and the sDe-srid. The main supporter of Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan was bsTan-pa dBang-phyug, the sPu-ṇa *rDzong dpon.* In the throes of the civil war, the sDe-srid had bsTan-pa dBang-phyug and Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan assassinated. The followers of the victims including *gter ston* 'Brug-sgra rdo-rje were also murdered. The strong defiance of his candidate, Phyogs-las rnam-rgyal, proved fatal to the sDe-srid himself, who fled from the capital with his incarnation; both, however, were overtaken and captured at the bridge of Haa Glang-chu and escorted back to sPa-ro. The hapless incarnation was detained in sPa-ro rDzong, whereas 'Brug Rab-rgyas was sentenced to death by being thrown in the sPa-ro River from the Nyal-mig Bridge, below sPa-ro rDzong. Cf. *Druk Dron* 301–05; Aris 1980: 258f.

228 *JGNT–II* 175b6–176a2: *sangs rgyas chos kyi gdan khri ru // byang chub shing gi lo 'dab rgyas // 'gro ba mang po ''dren don mdzad // 'di phyir bde ba'i nyi ma shar // chos pa khri thog thon pa dang // dar 'phyar snyan pa 'byung ngo yin.*



Fig 64 Sungtrul Chogley Namgyal (1708–1736) from a wall painting. Photo: Sonam Tobgay

Seeing the divination, Jamgön said: "There is no need of a throne for an old man [like me] who is only preparing for mountain retreat, so the prediction is not correct."

The earthquake that had occurred in the Third Month in fact boded ill. Shortly after, in the Eight Month of the same year, a large number of Mongol troops of Lhazang Qan under the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet surged into Haa [and Paro, Bumthang and Trashigang regions],[229] where the invading troops caused great distress

229 During the reign of the 8th Desi, lHa-bzang Qan, the Qosot Mongol ruler of Tibet invaded Bhutan. The reason for the military foray was grounded in the repeated border skirmishes between the dGe-lugs-pa of rTa-dbang and bKra-shis-sgang of eastern Bhutan. The rTa-dbang dGe-lugs-pa sought assistance from the Tibetan government. The ensuing invasion followed on three fronts, i.e. via sPa-ro, Bum-thang and bKra-shi-sgang. A fierce battle was reported to have taken place at Jakar, Bum-thang. During this battle, the sDe-srid 'Brug Rab-rgyas invoked the protective deities at lCags-ri, and at the same time bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa'i don-grub,

and panic among the people.

At one point, a man from a distant place came into the presence of Jamgön, requesting for a good protection amulet. Jamgön gave the following advice accompanied by so-called "co-emergent pills" (*lhan skyes ril bu*; Sahajā sacramental pills):

Agitated by the agonies of karmic activity and disturbing emotions,
When oppressed by the weapons of the five and the three mental poisons,
If you instead are clothed with the armour of love and compassion,
You will be triumphant over the sharp weapons of the three poisons.

This is the protective amulet of absolute truth,
Hence, put faith in the sublime teachings!
If it is necessary to leave for warfare,
You should be exceedingly observant of the following:

On the battlefield, stay behind;
If you want to flee, be the first;
On all accounts be on the safe side;
Surely then you will remain unharmed by any weapon![230]

On account of this, there was no need for the man to go to war, etc.

Jamgön received the order from the Desi Druk Rabgye that he should assume the responsibilities of Chila of Paro. Since he was apprehensive

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the sGang-steng sPrul-sku performed a number of rites of deterrence (*gtor bzlog*) based upon Myang-ral's esoteric Eight Commandments (*bKa' brgyad*) cycle. As a result, the invading troops were routed by the Bhutanese forces and the Tibetan soldiers killed or captured. At last an agreement was reported to have been signed and the Tibetan prisoners were released without punishment. The Mon-pa tribes in rTa-dbang region and the people from bKra-shis-sgang migrated in large numbers as a consequence of the unrest on Tibeto-Bhutanese frontier to Padma-bkod and to Panchashiri valleys in the Assam Hills. During the war, Byams-mgon served as sPa-ro Provincial Governor or *sPyi bla*. Cf. *Druk Dron* 297–300.

230 *JGNT-II* 176b3–4: *las dang nyon mongs zug rngu kun slong nas // dug lnga dug gsum mtshon gyis gtses pa na // byams dang rnying rje'i go cha cher bgos na // dug gsum rnon po'i mtshon las rgyal bar gyur // 'di ni don dam chos kyi mtshon srung yin // de phyir dam pa'i chos la yid ches kyis // gal te gyul ngor chas dgos na // shin tu zab 'dod 'di lta ste // phar 'gro'i dus su rting ma dang // gal ste bros na sna 'dren gyis // rnam pa kun tu btsan sa bzung // mtshon las rgyal bar the tshom med.*

about taking on such a commitment, he repeatedly entreated the Desi, claiming his inability to fulfil the assignment. Still the Desi did not relieve him, and so he was compelled to take the responsibility upon himself and thus proceeded to Paro. As Jamgön's appointment coincided with the warring skirmishes between Bhutan and Tibet, most of the food provisions held in the treasuries of Paro Dzong had been exhausted. During the conflict, Jamgön had to replenish the treasuries and oversee the entire administrative process, delegating the various responsibilities to different trusted men.

As Chila, he proved so dedicated to his work that he would not allow misuse or embezzlement of any kind; placing, as the biographer writes, the interest of others above his own, he would collect provisions for the storehouse and, even though he was entitled to receive a traditional share of provisions as personal recognition or award (*bdag rkyen, adhipatipratyaya*) to be used for his private purposes, a share equalling that of Zhabdrung Rinpoche and his son, he would not keep anything for himself, but would deposit his share in the government treasury. He strictly controlled the taking of evening meals by monks who had taken full monastic vows, and any breach of discipline he considered theft against the government. As a matter of fact, he found the creeping degeneration of monastic discipline most distressing. He attempted to give counsel on these issues, entreating each and every monk to strictly adhere to pure monastic conduct.

Accompanied by the chiefs of the different regions under Paro [district], Jamgön visited Punakha to attend the Dromchö ceremony. It was at that time that the Desi had noticed how the general behaviour, the demeanour and the morale of the monks had deteriorated, and in particular how very different the code of conduct and etiquette (*mdzad spyod sgrigs srol*) of the Drukpas had now become, when compared with what it had been in former times. Jamgön was instructed to carry out a revision of the code, and accordingly revised and put to the pen a law-code of orderly monastic conduct (*sgrigs rnam gzhag*) in great detail based on the ten Buddhist virtues. The new code of conduct was subsequently distributed throughout Bhutan in the Female-Wood-Dragon Year,

corresponding to 1724. In the words of his biographer, it is claimed that thereafter Buddhist learning and practice in Bhutan prospered.

After entrusting different responsibilities to various persons under him, Jamgön withdrew himself from secular affairs and remained in meditation in the central tower of Rinpung Dzong. Upon the completion of his meditation session, he performed a "vase consecration ritual" (*bum sgrub*) which involved "curse-repelling" (*byad grol*) for one week, executed this for the well-being of the country. It is recorded that the water in the vase was seen to boil as if heated by fire and everyone saw droplets spraying out from the vase of their own accord, an indication of the perfect accomplishment of the ritual.

A devastating disease prevailed among cattle at Drela ('Bras-la) Pass [above Paro Dzong] and many animals succumbed. Jamgön gave a "Rāhula Letter" or *zayig* (*gza' yig*) consisting of the eight-fold letter '*ga*' (*gza' yig ga brgyad ma*) along with a water-drop from the vase consecration. As if by a miracle, all the sick cattle immediately recovered after partaking of this, and the rest still not affected did not contract the disease.

On the Tenth Day of the Second Month, Jamgön himself presided over the Great Offering Ceremony of the Paro Tsechu, a great prayer service accompanied by intonement of religious music conducted in memory of Guru Padmasambhava. He delivered authorization (*anujñā*) teachings related to Guru Rinpoche (*guru rin po che'i rjes gnang*) to a gathering headed by leading personalities at his court. At that point one *jetsün* Drakpa Gyamtsho (*rje btsun* Grags-pa rgya-mtsho) arrived in his presence, and at the former's request, Jamgön gave him the authoritative reading transmission of the biography of Marpa Lotsawa (Marpa the Translator). He also gave some precepts concerning a "rainbow transference of consciousness" (*'pho ba 'ja' tshugs ma*)[231] to other people who had gathered there. He is also recorded as having written a lengthy versified eulogy in praise of the abbots upholding

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231 The same precepts were given by Byams-mgon to Kun-bzang ras-chen, who in turn gave them to Śā-kya rin-chen; see *SHRNT* GA 4a1.



Fig 65 Rinpung Dzong, Paro. Photo: Daza

the transmission line of the vows of Pratimokṣa. It was during this very period that he received the reading transmission of the biography of Zhabdrung Rinpoche in six parts written by *khenchen* Jamyang Pelden Gyamtsho (1610–1684)[232] from *chöje* Yonten Dzongpa Tenpa Wangchuk (bsTan-pa dbang-phyug).[233]

232 He belonged to the Karma-pa School with his monastic seat being at gSer-mdog-can in the gTsang province. He was one of the most accomplished scholars of his day in Tibet, and was the court-priest of the gTsang sDe-srid. He arrived in Bhutan shortly after the dGe-lugs-pa-Mongol allied forces had overthrown the latter in 1642. Zhabs-drung received him in sPu-ṇa-kha with great delight (Aris 1978: 228) and tried to persuade him to take charge of a new college for logic attached to the main monastic community. The syllabus was to be based on the teachings of Kun-mkhyen Pad-ma dkar-po, but the abbot declined and instead pursued a private life of teaching and meditation at sMan-chu-nang in sPa-ro which brought him into contact with many Bhutanese disciples who would later on hold important positions. He authored the famous biography of Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal titled: *dPal 'brug pa rin po che ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs*. Cf. Dargye 2001: 155.

233 He possibly stems from Yon-tan rdzong of La-yag district. His identity cannot be confirmed.

In the Paro region, prosperity and good harvest were reported to have prevailed, and the people were said to be living contented lives. Jamgön's fame now had spread as far as India [Assam] and the remaining parts of the land of the Monpas. He received many presents accompanied by letters stating: 'It is utmost fortunate that an incomparable Dharma King like you now has become the Glory both for the Teachings and for Living Beings!' In return, he sent sacramental substances and pills along with letters to those who had sent him presents and letters, and thus placed these spiritual well-wishers onto the path to enlightenment through establishing karmic connections to each of them.

2. Resigning as Pönlop and Seeking Spiritual Pursuits

Jamgön, who had now been Paro Pönlop for more than one year, went to Trashichödzong accompanied by his retinue for the annual Thimphu Dromchö. As required by tradition, he made a series of annual offerings to the great monk community.

Since he had always wanted, from earliest childhood, to focus on religious practices only and since the responsibilities entailed in dealing with secular affairs were both wearying and troublesome, he again decided to submit to the government that he was unable to continue to serve in a secular role. This time the government consented to relinquishing his position as Paro Pönlop, albeit he was requested to remain in the government service for a while longer. During this period, he [commissioned] the execution of a number of wall paintings for the vestibule walls of the congregation hall at Punakha. These included the Cosmic World as explained in the Kālacakra and the Abhidharmakośa, the Wheel of Life, the Kālacakra symbol of Namchu Wangden (rNam bcu dbang ldan), the Evam Dradrub (E-vam sgra sgrub), the Paradisical Abode known as Pel Dejung (dPal bde-'byung) or *Shambhala*, and under each mural, a long versified caption was added. For a couple of months, he performed the "vase consecration ritual" which included curse-repelling *(byad grol bum sgrub)* to protect and safeguard the well-being of the country.



Fig. 66 Wangdütse Lhakhang (Zabdön Lhüntse Gönpa). Photo: Yonten Dargye

Now finally, Jamgön received permission to resign from secular duties. Well content, he decided to go into retreat at Yulsar (Yul-gsar), a pleasant mountain slope, which was the seat of his forefathers [evidently located on the way to Seula]. From there he went on to settle at Seula (Se'u-la, Se-ba'i la) located in surroundings that were conducive to spiritual practice. He invited an eminent spiritual friend called Tenpa Gyaltshen (bsTan-pa rgyal-mtshan) who was residing at Khothangkha to join him at his retreat residence. From him, Jamgön received the reading authorization of the Känjur – firstly of the Hundred Thousand Verses of Prajñāpāramitā (*'Bum*) and some sections from the Sūtrapitaka. At one point, he was summoned by the government at Punakha to print *zung* (dhāranī fillings) for Zabdön Lhüntse Gönpa (Zab-don lHun-rtse).[234]

At Punakha, Jamgön, *chöje* Komthrangpa Yeshe Ngödrub (*chos rje* Kom-'phrang-pa Ye-shes dngos-grub, d. 1727)[235] and Ngawang Pekar

234 This temple is located above bKra-shis chos-rdzong, in Thim-phu. It was built by the 8th sDe-srid 'Brug Rab-rgyas *alias* Deb Jawo (rg. 1707–19) in 1715. Its main *nang rten* is a two-storey Buddha image made of medicinal clay (*sman 'jim*), and a *Bye ba mchod rten*, as well as eight *mchod-rten* made of sandalwood. Today, the temple is known by dBang-'dus-rtse.

235 For details, see Kom-'phrang *chos rje*'s biography *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa grub*

jointly performed rituals related to the insertion of consecratory *zung*. Though he had completed the works related to the printing of such *zung*, on the behest of the Desi, Jamgön went to Thimphu [i.e. to Zabdön Lhüntse Gönpa]. There he was requested to execute and coordinate the preparation of *zung* consecratory fillings for all the objects and also to insert the appropriate number of *zung* into different objects and images executed by himself in order to avoid any mistakes with respect to the proper sequence.

After the completion of the temple, the consecration ceremony based on the Cakrasaṃvara Cycle was performed elaborately over three consecutive days, presided over by Ngawang Chogley Namgyal and Jamgön, as well as by a number of other spiritual masters. Upon the expressed wish of Ngawang Lhündrub, Jamgön gave him the reading authorization of the cycle of Tandin Nāga Ludul (rTa mgrin nā ga klu 'dul), once revealed by Zhigpo Lingpa (Zhig-po gling-pa).[236]

At Wangdü Phodrang, Jamgön received the reading transmission of the Känjur Rochog (bKa'-'gyur ro-cog) cycle[237] from *drubchen* Yeshe Dorje (Ye-shes rdo-rje) who resided in mountain retreat at Lateng (La-lteng). On reaching Punakha, Jamgön became ill due to food poisoning and, still unwell, he subsequently went to his retreat residence at Seula.

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pa'i dbang phyug rdo rje 'chang chen po Ye shes dngos grub kyi rtogs brjod Bai ḍūrya'i mchod sdong ngo mtshar 'od brgya'i 'byung gnas (Ms 1b1–391a6 = 1–783) written by Zhabs-drung Phyogs-las rnam-rgyal.

236 It refers to the treasure-revealer's no more extant Hayagrīva cycle denoted *rTa mgrin nā ga bdud 'dul.* For the controversial Gar-dbang Zhig-po gling-pa (1624–1683); cf. *RCP* Sørensen and Hazod (App. II). He incidentally was the great grandfather of Zhabs-drung, since Zhig-po gling-pa's daughter was married to Mi-pham chos-rgyal (1543–1604), and mother to Mi-pham bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma, father on his side of Zhabs-drung.

237 The small opusculum *bKa' 'gyur ro cog gi snying po bsdus pa'i gzungs* or the *Mantra* comprising the Essence of the Entire Känjur" (cf. ed. 1b1–6a6; ed. by Pema Dorje, The National Library, 1992) is said to be a small *gter ma* once buried by Guru Rin-po-che and later revealed by Guru Chos kyi dbang-phyug (1212–1273), one of the five great *gter ston* "kings" of Tibet. It contains number of *mantras*: Reciting these, equals reciting the entire Prajñāpāramitā in 100,000; 25.000, etc verses.

The *gDung* families of Lug-chu and Nya-lam in sKur-stod claim descent from Guru Chos-dbang through his son Pad-ma dBang-chen.

As it was cold inside his residence, his condition became serious, yet he continued to remain in the state of meditation. Worried about Jamgön's health, his attendants started performing many healing rites including prayers for his stability of his life. However, his condition did not turn to the better. Knowing that the place would be suitable for him, the attendants now took him to Namgyaltse located on the mountain-top overlooking the entire valley of the Thed [Punakha] region. The place turned out to be quite refreshing and pleasant; it was also the place where Jamgön's forefathers and his Root-Lama, Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer had remained in secluded meditation. Jamgön's condition now gradually improved and finally he recovered fully, his recovery ascribed in no small part, so it is said, to the pleasant surroundings and the blessings of his teachers.

On the left side of the Namgyaltse mountain a beautiful plateau called Kyipela [=Kila] (sKyid-pa'i-la [=skyid-la)] spreads out, and it was in that area that Jamgön founded his retreat residence, later to be known as Chökhor Dorjeden (Chos-'khor rDo-rje-ldan). He erected a simple cottage inside which was shrine room over six feet square, a storeroom, and a kitchen, and he put up a fence around the dwelling. Jamgön soon settled down in his new retreat residence in order to pursue meditation.

However, before long he was summoned by the government, and again had to proceed to Punakha. To Drubwang Rinpoche Yeshe Ngödrub, he gave complete reading transmission on the practices of retreat Dharma or teachings (*ri chos*) of Gyalwa Yangönpa (rGyal-ba Yang-dgon-pa) on the great commentary of the Pratimokṣa, on the Specific Gurusādhana and Tantra cycles pertaining to Mahākāla.[238] On the request of the Desi and the Je Khenpo (*gong sa mchod yon*), Jamgön began delivering reading authorization and the transmission of the precious Känjur to Drubwang Rinpoche.

238 rGyal-ba Yang-dgon-pa rGyal-mtshan-dpal (1213–1258) was a famous ascetic master of the 'Brug-pa school. Renowned for his influential teachings for retreatants *ri chos* (*ri chos skor gsum*; the Trilogy of Mountain Teachings), which influenced and inspired generations of retreatants or *ri khrod pa* in Tibet. See *YSHNT* 260a5f.

The monk community left for its winter residence in Punakha. Here, Jamgön continued giving reading transmission of the Känjur to Drubwang Rinpoche. It was finally completed after more than one year, whereupon a grand thanksgiving ceremony was held. This involved making rich offerings in material form as well as prayers to Jamgön for his long-life.

At that time Śākya Rinchen[239] was still young, only about 13 years old. He came to Punakha with his uncle and there had an opportunity to see Jamgön. Shaving his hair and changing his name, Śākya Rinchen was ordained and received the empowerment of longevity. Although he was still young and had little sense of understanding about religion, it is reported that due to previous karmic disposition, on merely hearing Jamgön's name, tears fell from his eyes.

Returning to his retreat residence at Chökhor Dorjeden, Jamgön started to build the Jangchub Chörten made from sandalwood in memory of his Root-Lama Sönam Yözer. It was more than eighteen inches high

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239 *rGyal-ba* Śā-kya rin-chen Dri-med legs-pa'i blo-gros (1710–1759) was well-known for his extensive learning and profound meditational practice. He was born in 1710 at Shar Rus-pa Sems-skyo in dBang-'dus District. At the age of 13, he went to Se'u-la where he served Byams-mgon Ngag-dbang rgyal-mtshan and was initiated into the minor vows. See *SHRNT* GA: 2b4ff.) He gradually received all key teachings of the 'Brug-pa tradition. He was initiated into the major vows under Ngag-dbang 'phrin-las, the 7th rJe mKhan-po (rg. 1730–1738), who gave him the hair-cutting name 'Brug Chos-'phel; he further received extensive teachings and instructions. He also received profound instructions from the 10th sDe-srid *gong sa* Mi-pham dBang-po (rg. 1729–36) and *bshes gnyen* bsTan-pa rgyal-mtshan. He would rise to become one of the most accomplished spiritual masters of his day.

At the age of 35, Śā-kya rin-chen was installed as the 9th rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan. In his capacity as rJe mKhan-po, he founded three monastic centres, namely, 'Og-min rNam-par rgyal-ba'i Khang-zang at Thub-bstan Bya-rgod Phung-po in Pha-jo-sdings, the dPal Nālaṇḍa'i Chos-gdong at rTa-log and dPal-ri rDo-rje-gdan at Nor-bu-sgang in sPu-ṇa-kha. These became active centres of learning. Besides these, he was engaged in numerous religious activities during his eleven years as the rJe mKhan-po. He authored several Buddhist treatises and eminent biographies of saintly figures of Bhutan at that time. At the age of 46, he relinquished the responsibilities of the office of rJe mKhan-po and went to Pha-jo-sdings where he passed away at the age of 50. For details, see his bulky biography *SHRNT* (Sect. KA–PA). It was co-authored by 13th rJe mKhan-po Yon-tan mtha'-yas (rg. 1771–75) and Ngag-dbang kun-dga' rgya-mtsho (rg. 1769–71); see also *LCB-II* 144b4–46b5.

(*srid kkhru dang mkhyid tshad*) and was covered with pure silver on which intricate patterns were incised on a gold inlay. Inside it there were precious relics. This Chörten was said to be the main sacred object of Seula Chökhor Dorjeden.[240]

Jamgön's younger brother, Ngawang Phüntsho had faced great hardship over and over again, involving the loss of his house, land and properties at his homeland in Amorimu, and he had also suffered physically at the hands of his tyrants. He now withdrew himself from worldly life and went to a mountain retreat called Ramabir[241] to lead a secluded life in meditation. He is said to have gained matchless spiritual accomplishment and to have gathered many disciples around him. He predeceased Jamgön, who is said to have made dedication prayers including root-virtues in a perfect manner for his deceased brother.

3. Performing Miracles and Delivering Teachings

At one time, a village headman from a certain village called Drangchu (sBrang-chu) came to meet Jamgön saying: "O Lama Rinpoche, since there has been no rain in the entire Thed region in general and in my village in particular, we are not able to carry out farming, therefore may I request you to make rain fall." Jamgön replied: "I am not the one who gained control over the elements; I do not even possess magical power, so how can I be able to produce rain? Hence, it is better you request other masters."

Since the man repeatedly pleaded, "It cannot be misleading if we pray to the Triple Gem," saying thus, Jamgön started making a propitiation ritual to the protective deity Pelden Lhamo, and instantly the sky became overcast, and as soon as *torma* were thrown into the fire, rain began

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240 A stūpa in the shape of *khang gzugs mchod rten* stands in front of the entrance to the main Chos-'khor rdo-rje gdan monastery, enshrining the *sku gdung mchod rten* said to be that of bSod-nams 'od-zer. See Fig. 73

241 Located in dGon Sha-ri, today this place is known as Ram-sbyis. It is said to have been the seat of the Sa-skya Order. The lha-khang is said to have been burnt down some thirty years back. Now it is in ruins.

to pour down, and it rained continuously for several days. The whole landscape which had earlier been grey and dry now turned lush and green and the people were very happy, saying 'what a heavy downpour this year!'

Jamgön was once invited to consecrate a temple of Nyizer Lhakhang (Nyi-zer lha-khang),[242] near Wangdü Phodrang after its renovation had been completed. He consecrated the temple with a ritual ceremony dedicated to Vajradhara and gave the empowerment of longevity to all the people gathered there. He then went to Wangdü Phodrang where he was most respectfully received by the Dzongpön. He gave empowerment of Aksobhya to those residing in the Dzong. He visited all the sacred objects inside the central tower and made offerings and aspiration prayers. Invited by devotees, he thereafter went to a village which was constantly afflicted by death and curses. Transforming himself into Wrathful Guru, he performed a ritual to dispel obstructing forces through the wrathful intent of the contemplative state and then gave the empowerment of longevity, whereafter it was said that the village was not affected by misfortune anymore and it prospered.

At Punakha, he met with *chöje* Ngawang Pekar (*chos rje* Ngag-dbang pad-dkar) from whom he received the vows of the Seven Branches of a Bodhisattva (*byang sems kyi sdom pa yan lag bdun pa*), the Three Kinds of Discipline (*tshul khrims gsum*), and the ritual pertaining to the Three Stages of a Practice (*sbyor dngos rjes*). After having performed the funeral rites (*zhugs sbyangs*) for the deceased Dzongpön of Punakha, he again left for his retreat residence at Chökhor Dorjeden.

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242 This monastic seat known as Nyi-zer dGe-'dun chos-gling is located opposite to the present day dBang-'dus pho-brang rDzong founded by *gter ston* 'Ug-pa gling-pa during the 13th century. Through his reincarnations the lineage of the Nyi-zer *sprul sku* emerged. The line merged with the 'Brug-pa school during the time of rJe Yon-tan mtha'-yas, the 13th rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan (rg. 1771–75) and his disciple 'Phrin-las rab-rgyas.

'Phrin-las lhun-grub, the 67th rJe mKhan-po (rg. 1971–84) was a Nyi-zer sPrul-sku who descended from 'Ug-pa gling-pa. He passed away in 2005, at his summer residence at Nyi-zer rnam-rgyal chos-gling) in Bar-sbis-sa (Babisa) in Thim-phu.

In accordance with the scriptural transmissions of former masters, he wrote mantric formulas (*mtshan gzungs*) including that of Buddha Śākyamuni above the doorway of his residence at Seula Chökhor Dorjeden; he also carved mantric formulas of Dezhin Shegpa Śākyai Tog (*de bzhin gshegs pa śākya'i tog*) and of the Rigsum Gönpo (*Rigs gsum mgon po*) in alternating *lantsā* and *uchen* scripts on a woodblock; whatever cloths came to his hands he used for raising prayer-flags. From that time onwards, year after year, many monks would assemble at his residence to receive teachings, and to all of these he gave teachings according to their level of understanding and devotion. He explained to his disciples the following:

> In general, the lineage of our precious Kargyud tradition is the quintessence of all; in particular, the main characteristic practice of the glorious Drukpa, the exclusive devotion to our Lama being our main principal approach, a great number of ascetics and saints therefore appeared [in our tradition] as numerous as stars in the sky and as dust-particles on earth; moreover, due to the certainty that it has been said [once in one source]: "Nāropa, bless the Northern Direction [i.e. Himalaya]!" the entire Snow-capped Region [i.e. Tibet] became a proper vessel for the activities of the glorious Drukpa School. On account of this, its teachings will spread as far as a vulture can travel in eighteen days of flight (*bya rgod kyi nyin lam bco brgyad*).[243]

243 Gling ras-pa Pad-ma rdo-rje (1128–1188). An anecdote is recounted claiming that he gave a conch-shell (*dung dkar*), drum (*rnga*) and bell (*dril bu*) to his three disciples, and sent them to different places to practise meditation. One received a bell and the other two received a conchshell and a drum. The two disciples who received a conchshell and drum preserved them, and did not make use of them, thinking that those were gifts from their Guru. The one who received the bell was gTsang-pa rgya-ras. Thinking that whoever hears the sound of a bell [the Dharma sound] would be freed from the lower realms, he slung the bell on a vulture which was residing nearby his meditation cave. Frightened by the sound of the bell while taking to its wings, the vulture went on flying for eighteen days, which was seen as an auspicious portent. gTsang-pa rgya-ras accordingly would spread his teachings ['Brug-pa Teachings] to a distance covered by a vulture in about eighteen days (*bya rgod po nyin lam bco brgyad tsam du khyab pa grags*), whereas the other two disciples could spread as far as the sounds of a conchshell and a drum could reach. Cf. Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje 1999: 54–55



Fig. 67 Thrulzhig Namkhai Naljor from a wall painting. Photo: P. K Sørensen

Thrulzhig Namkhai Naljor ('Khrul-zhig Nam-mkha'i rnal-'byor)[244] once told Gyalwang Je Künga Penjor:[245] "If you feel that you cannot uphold the family lineage, make the realization of your Lama the main practice of your realization, and make the Gurupūjā the foremost form of your offering.

In sum, he made his disciples undergo retreat dedicated to the realization

244 Also known as Yon-tan sangs-rgyas. While considered one of the five greatest masters of the 'Brug-pa school, details of his life are still not readily available. He was teacher to Kun-dga' dpal-'byor. He came to western Bhutan where he founded the temple of sPos-bdud dgon-pa (Pödud Gönpa) above rDo-rje-brag (Dojedrak), on the mountain slope above present-day Thim-phu valley. See Aris 1979: 177.

245 He was the first incarnation of the 'Brug-pa founder gTsang-pa rgya-ras and one of the first conscious Avalokiteśvara incarnations in Tibet. He also acted as the 13th prince-abbot of the ancestral monastery at Rva-lung. He was known as rGyal-dbang rJe. He conducted a number of lengthy visits to Bhutan starting from 1449, strengthening the ecclesiastic and spiritual ties to the area. See his biography *Ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i thig pa* 31b3–32a6, 33b1–2, 35a1–2. See also Yonten Dargye 2001: 86-87.



Fig. 68 Jowo Jampa (Maitreya Buddha) in the Jampa Lhankang at Paro Dzong. Photo: Daza

of their Guru. He also gave them many other key Drukpa teachings such as the Grand Service of Saṃvara (*bde mchog bsnyeṇ chen*), the Billion Times Maṇi Recitations (*Ma ṇi dung 'phyur*), the Sevenfold Virtuous Practice (*dge sbyor bdun pa*), and Lama Devotion (*bla ma mos gus*), and so forth, to their hearts' content.[246] The number of meditation practitioners proliferated remarkably.

He stitched a robe out of good silk brocade and sent it as a robe for the statue of Maitreya Buddha at Rinpung Dzong in Paro, proclaiming:

> This is an auspicious sign for attaining enlightenment during the time of Buddha Maitreya, you all pray for that and you will be born as first followers of him.

Furthermore, having stitched three woollen robes of good quality (*ther legs kyi snam sbyar gsum*), he embroidered along the edges the letters reading: 'May all living beings attain the Ten Perfections (*'gro kun pha rol phyin bcu thob par shog*).' "This is an auspicious sign for entering into the practice of Buddha's teachings for all successive life-times (*tshe rabs thams cad du rgyal ba'i bstan pa la 'jug pa'i rten 'brel yin*)," he proclaimed, and offered it to the great monk community [at Punakha].

He also made four Maṇḍala objects out of pure silver, patterned with turquoise on the outside, and offered one each to Känjur Lhakhang (bKa'-'gyur lha-khang), Lama Lhakhang (Bla-ma lHa-khang), Künra Lhakhang (Kun-ra lha-khang) in Punakha Dzong and one to Lama Lhakhang in Rinpung Dzong. To Nyizer Lhakhang also, he offered a silk robe and a cotton canopy (*bla re*) for the Buddha statue. To Tshephug Lhakhang of Gön, he offered a silk canopy and a colourful altar cover (*stan kheb*). He crafted five gold-gilded *thangkas* (*gser thang*) of one thousand Buddhas, and after consecrating them he offered them to Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye (prior to his demise). He also made a volume of the Sūtra of the Fortunate Aeon (Bhadrakalpika-sūtra) – with the first dark blue page written in raised gilt letters, rich wrappers, a belt with silver ring, and gold patterned *lantsā* script on the wooden cover

246 These teachings in part are particular 'Brug-pa practices; see Dargye and Sørensen 2001: 13.

– which was consecrated and installed as one of the main sacred objects in [Punakha Dzong].

He wrote some other volumes of scriptures such as the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra in Eight Thousand Verses and the Lalitavistara-sūtra. He erected a gilded copper statue of Buddha Śākyamuni filled with precious multiplying relics of the Tathāgāta (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i 'phel gdung*) inside; he also erected other images such as Maitreya-nātha, Avalokiteśvara, of Zhabdrung Rinpoche, of Guru Padmasambhava, and Amitayus, all of which were made of either gilded copper, or silver, or sandalwood and filled with precious relics inside, wrapping the images with rich robes. He consecrated the images, and had them installed as one of the the main sacred objects in Punakha Dzong.

Jamgön entered into meditation at Punakha Dzong. It was at that time that *jetsün* Ngawang Thinley (Ngag-dbang 'phrin-las), the head of the meditation centre of Chökyong Phodrang (Chos-skyong Pho-brang)[247] accompanied by a few attendants made a request to meet Jamgön. Since they knew each other very well, Jamgön agreed to meet him though he was in meditation at that time. Jamgön gave *jetsün* Ngawang Thinley the instruction on the interdependence (*rten 'brel*) of phenomena. Jamgön is said to have narrated to his biographer:

> This Lama is a great sublime being incomparable to others. Other [ordinary] people are equal-minded, not knowing to choose [proper] things and accordingly seem [to act] as if they are free from attachment (*dngos po'i dga' lod mi shes pa'i mgo snyoms de 'dra la chags bral du 'dzin*); this is [in fact a sheer] misunderstanding. [Conversely], despite knowing the true value of things, still [this Lama] possesses the wondrous quality of being able to give away things in a detached way. For him [a highly accomplished master], it is certain that "gold and stone are of equal value (*gser dang bong ba mnyam pa*).

Once, when Jamgön went out for religious services, he had to stop one night in a village, and slept in a tent pitched under a tree. That very evening, the sky above his resting-place was covered with a blanket

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247 This may be identified with 'Brug Chos-skyong at Khu-byug-la, the seat of Ngag-dbang chos-rgyal (1465–1540) located under dBang-'dus Dist.



Fig. 69 The image of 9th Je Khenpo Śākya Rinchen (1710–1759) kept at Wangdü Phodrang Dzong. Photo: Sonam Tobgay

of clouds looking like a parasol, which remained there throughout the night while the other parts of the sky were crystal-clear. In the morning, it was found that although the surroundings were covered in hard frost, the area just below the cloud parasol not only was free from frost but also was shiny.

Around that time, Śākya Rinchen, spurred by sheer devotion for the Dharma, came into the presence of Jamgön. He here received teachings for the first time. The monk community at that point was headed by Lochen *chöje* Ngawang Sönam (Lo-chen Ngag-dbang bsod-nams), Jamgön's chief disciple, and they made a great number of prayers of long-life for Jamgön. Those monks who had completed their retreat session repeatedly requested Jamgön to give them authorization teachings of Śrī Devī [Pelden Lhamo] intended to serve as a thanksgiving prayer (*gtang rag*) for successfully completing their retreat, and he kindly agreed to do so. The next morning, while the monks were making *torma* for the ritual, Jamgön ordered: "Let's not give the authorization of Lhamo today." Initially, everyone wondered why he would say such a thing. Shortly afterwards, many people from Gön arrived to see him. All were astounded over his premonition.

Chapter VIII

FOUNDING A SEAT

1. Founding of Seula Chökhor Dorjeden: Turning the Wheel of Dharma

Jamgön now gradually began to gather many disciples around him; he not only had disciples coming from the two principal monastic seats – Trashichödzong and Punakha, but also from other parts of the country. He continued delivering numerous teachings beginning with preliminary practice to the highest level of teachings which included pith instructions, precepts, and initiations of the Drukpa Kagyud system. After the disciples had been fully trained in the theoretical part of the teachings, Jamgön had them undergo practical training in meditation. The honing of yogic or meditational skills, he contended, was the most important part of the Buddhist practice.

Since Jamgön's hermitage at Seula (Se'u-la)[248] was very small, the hermitage faced a problem in accommodating disciples while providing

248 The name of Byams-mgon's main monastic seat Se'u-la – orig. Se-ba'i la (i.e. the "Pass/Ridge of the Rose-bush"?) – appears most readily to be corruption of the orig. sKyid-pa'i la, the "Pass/Ridge of Comfort (= Serenity?)." See also *SHRNT* Ga 8b4–6.

teachings and empowerments. Hence, the idea of building a new and bigger residence soon came up, but Jamgön said, "It is useless for me to plan for this when my old age, sickness and death are lurking around the corner." He therefore did not accept the idea at first, but when his followers persisted, he finally agreed.

The residence-cum-monastery was now extended by his most devout disciples and loyal followers and the consecration ceremony was performed in a most consummate manner, for three full days, during which *lochen* Ngawang Sönam offered long-life prayers according to the Padma Lingpa system of Invoking the Dākinīs (*mkha' 'gro gdan bzhugs*). The place was ceremoniously named Chökhor Dorjeden, or the "Vajra Seat for Turning the Wheel of Dharma."[249]

At Chökhor Dorjeden, Jamgön gave four complete empowerments[250] of Cakrasaṃvara to a large gathering of monks headed by Chung Rinpoche Ngawang Pekar, and to *lochen* Ngawang Sönam. He gave them detailed explanations about observance of the *samaya*-vows, saying:

> Nowadays, due to the general degeneration of practice, there are many who transgress the Threefold Vows, and so it is very important that you yourselves strive to acknowledge your own transgressions and rid yourselves of impurities; even if you cannot accomplish that, you should at least recite the One Hundred-Syllable Mantra (*yig brgya*) dedicated to Vajrasattva no less than twenty-one times daily, in whichever way is convenient to you; in particular, make confession by reciting the Root Verses of Downfalls (*rtsa ltung*) regularly, at least one time a day. Not only has this Confession of Downfalls been commended by the great master Lingrepa Pema Dorje (Gling-ras-pa Padma rdo-rje)[251] as being greatly beneficial, but is also said to be of profound help as a counter measure in purifying the root and branch samaya that are to be observed.

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249 The year of foundation is stated to be 1715.

250 The four-fold empowerments are the 'vase empowerment' (*bum dbang*), the 'secret empowerment' (*gsang dbang*), the 'primordial-wisdom empowerment' (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*), the 'word empowerment' (*tshig dbang*).

251 Gling-ras-pa Padma rdo-rje was a senior disciple of Phag-mo-gru-pa. He founded the Gling-ras bKa'-brgyud-pa when he erected a monastery at sNa-phu. Hence, he was also known as sNa-phu-pa. He became the Root-Lama of the 'Brug-pa founder gTsang-pa rGya-ras Ye-shes rDo-rje, the first patriarch of the 'Brug-pa School.

Further, he instructed his disciples:

> While practising Dharma, you have to endure great hardship. The tradition of the Dagpo Kargyüd which at one time became renowned like the sun and the moon is not like a cover or husk [of corn or rice], but represents the quintessence of all that is essential, and this tradition is still flourishing without impairment. Not fearing or shying away from the hardship and taking upon yourselves all the sufferings, pursue your practice with great endeavour in order to direct your life to the sublime stage. Whenever there are challenging and terrifying experiences at night, remain steadfast, free from the extremes of hope and fear and with complete trust in your mind. Keep your mind free of false ideas. If a feeling of timidity arises in your mind, raise your body upright and apply earnest attention to your mind. With mindfulness say '*phat*' with a loud voice, and then say: "Let anything come, let it go anywhere, there is no need whatsoever for it."[252] Recite the three kinds of Fierce Mantras which I have given you, as many times as possible, keeping them inseparably with you. Your attachment and clinging will automatically subside, if you yourselves remain free from conceptual thoughts of rejecting and accepting.

The master Tenpa Gyaltshen (bsTan-pa rgyal-mtshan) accompanied by his attendants arrived in the presence of Jamgön. Jamgön urged the master:

> Compared to earlier days, the precious Teachings of Buddha now are in a state of degeneration and in particular, although *künkhyen* Pemakarpo has written many important expositions on quintessential instructions, precepts, and liturgical subjects, due to the ill fortune of sentient beings, most of these writings have already been lost and now exist only in fragmentary form. Hence the tradition of the Drukpa is also on the verge of becoming merely a name. It seems that a Sakya lama who now lives in Shar Phangyul [i.e. referring to Shar Dargye Gönpa] is very learned in all fields. Even though it may be fatiguing to you, if you can receive empowerment, transmission and precepts of Hevajra including its complete texts, and also other teaching and empowerment including the Kālacakra and Guhyasāmaja Tantra as it may suit you, it would be extremely beneficial for you. I, therefore, request you to kindly take up this responsibility.

252 *ci yong ba shog / gang ltar 'gro ba song / ci yang dgos pa med.*



Fig. 70 Chökhor Dorjeden Monastery perched on a hillock (named Kyipela) at Seula before its restoration. Photo: P. K. Sørensen



Fig. 71 Chökhor Dorjeden Monastery under restoration. Photo: Daza



Fig. 72 Restored Chökhor Dorjeden Monastery. Photo: Daza



Fig 73 Khangzug Chörten enshrining the Kudung Chörten of Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer at Seula. Photo: Daza



Fig 74 Portrait of Guru Rinpoche in the Kubag Lhakhang at Seula. Photo: Daza



Fig. 75 Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen from a wall painting in the Kubag Lhakhang at Seula. Photo: Daza



Fig. 76 Kudung Chörten of Je Khenpo Sönam Yözer kept in the Khangzug Chörten of Fig. 73 above . Photo: P. K. Sørensen



Fig. 77 Kudung Chörten of the 5th *chöje* Yeshe Ngödrub (1951–1983) kept at Chökhor Dorjeden, Seula. Photo: P. K. Sørensen



Fig. 78 Jowo Jampa (Maitreya Buddha) built by *chöje* Ngawang Thinley (1712–1770) at Chökhor Dorjeden, Seula. Photo: Daza



Fig. 79 *Chöje* Ngawang Thinley. Photo: P. K. Sørensen



Fig. 80 *Jamgön* Yeshe Dorje (1757–1805) kept in the Kubag Lhakhang at Seula. Photo: Daza



Fig. 81 Jampel Yeshe Dorje (1757–1805) from a wall painting at Seula. Photo: P. K. Sørensen



Fig. 82 Ngawang Sizhi Namgyal, the 58th Je Khenpo (rg. 1927–1931) from a wall painting at Seula. Photo: P. K. Sørensen



Fig. 83 Namgyaltse, the Gönkhang of Damchen Gomo. Photo: Daza

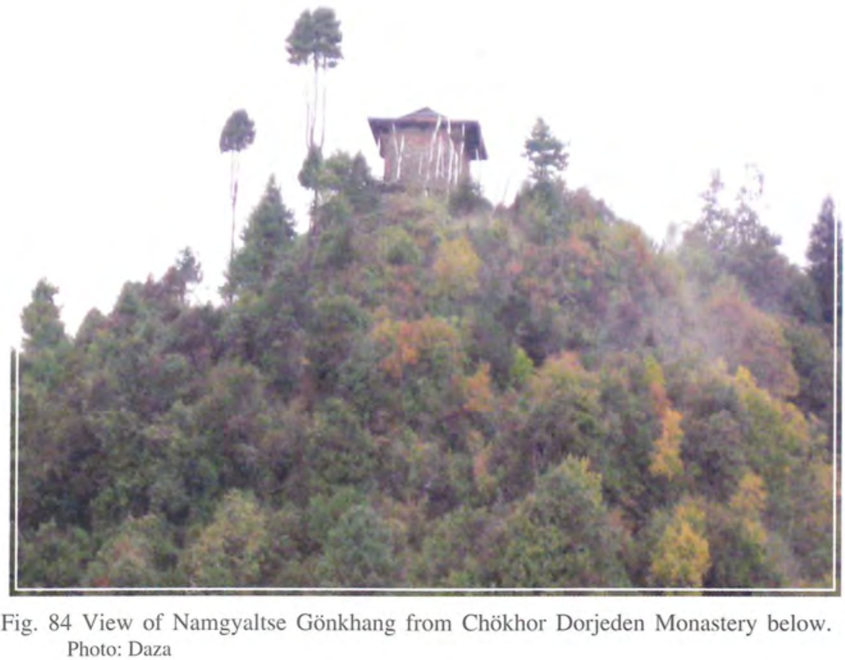


Fig. 84 View of Namgyaltse Gönkhang from Chökhor Dorjeden Monastery below. Photo: Daza



Fig. 85 Damchen Gomo from a *thangka* painting. Photo: Daza



Fig. 86 Effigy of Damchen Gomo at Namgyaltse Gönkhang. Photo: Daza



Fig 87 Meditation cave of Pekar Trashi (1598–1682) at Namgyaltse. Photo: Daza



Fig 88 Mänmo Drubchu at Seula. Photo: Daza

Tenpa Gyaltshen was then dispatched with a large amount of offerings to receive the teachings. At that time, Jamgön also conducted a ritual dedicated to Buddha Aksobhya, including the performance of the fire pūjā two thousand times, and then satisfied all the ritual performers (*cho ga pa*) with a large amount of gifts of both cash and in kind.

At times in the midst of delivering teachings, Jamgön gave essential religious instructions. He said:

> Our Dagpo Kargyud Tradition is the lineage of practice and blessing, so whatever the activity of a Lama may be, do not question it and believe always that whatever the Lama does is for the sake of the disciples. It is necessary to pray to your Lama with the utmost devotion while thinking that he is the embodiment of all the Buddhas; and whatever you do, repose your complete trust and faith in the Lama while seeking refuge.

Again, at another time, after having remained quiet in meditation, Jamgön said:

> On occasions when you are overwhelmed with uncontrolled thinking, leading to dismay, anger, imaginings and so forth. You should visualize that in your heart is a fully opened eight-petalled lotus, in the centre of which is a precious lion-throne decorated with various silken cloths. On top of this is the seat of the lotus, the sun and the moon, upon which your Root-Lama rests with a smiling face, emitting rays of blessing. Pray to him with devotion from the bottom of your heart, recollect his kindness and think that the Lama and your mind are an inseparable unity. Leave your mind in equanimity!

Also, he counselled his disciples on religious matters:

> To be able to enter into Buddhist practice, you should make a spiritual pledge and commitment; this is the tradition to train your mind towards Bodhicitta. Although it is necessary to practise pure Dharma without intermingling with worldly affairs, due to great obscuration caused by ignorance and habitual tendencies, it is hard to be mindful and conscientious. Nevertheless, it is very important that the outer discipline and behaviour should be in conformity with the vows of Pratimokṣa. As it is said, "Just as the earth is the foundation of everything in the world, so also moral discipline is the foundation of all virtues." The training of moral practice is the basis of all good qualities, so nurture it with determination. As far

> as possible you should not allow your moral practice, even in the slightest, to wander carefree. Since the difference between the greater and smaller vehicles rests with the unique Generation of the Mind [towards Enlightenment] ([*byang chub*] *sems bskyed*), it is important to persevere in the practice of the precious Bodhicitta, yet it will be of no benefit if you do not know how to practice it by way of the threefold concepts.[253]In this connection, Gyalwang Je Künga Penjor said that if one's practice is in accordance with the outer discipline (*phyi 'dul ba*) and inner mantra (*nang gsang sngags*) tradition, its essence will be naturally comprehended. This maxim has a great meaning. There is no other concern for you than carrying out this practice, therefore find ways and means to tame your mind when it is paralyzed by disturbing emotions.

Following these instructions, Jamgön gave empowerment to a group of fifty disciples of the Five-Deity Ghaṇṭapāda (*Dril bu lha lnga*) of the cycle of Cakrasaṃvara and the cycle "The Great Compassionate One: Liberation from the Cycle of Transmigration (*Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgrol*),[254] including an initiation into Mahāmudrā.

At the request of his followers, he painted a number of beautiful murals depicting the Sixteen Rigma (*rigs ma bcu drug* – deities) and the landscapes of the animate and inanimate worlds [as narrated in the Buddhist cosmology] along the inner walls of his residence. He also painted on the outer walls, beneath the roof overhang, the landscape of Kashmir, the ornate symbols of Namchu Wangden (rNam-bcu dBang-ldan), the Landscape of Long-life (*tshe ring ljongs*), and so forth,[255] During this process, Śākya Rinchen remained in Jamgön's presence and helped him with the paintings.

The spiritual master Tenpa Gyaltshen returned to see Jamgön after fulfilling the responsibility with which he had been entrusted. From him, Jamgön received the four complete empowerments of the Nine-Deity Hevajra, and in return Jamgön offered a large amount of offerings in gratitude for receiving the empowerment. After staying for a few

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253 *'Khor gsum rnam dag*: subject, object and action.

254 The celebrated Cakrsasaṃvara cycles of Vajra Ghaṇṭapāda, and the cycle stemming from Zhig-po gling-pa.

255 The paintings are no more present at Se'u-la.

days, the master left. Jamgön pondered:

> At all times throughout my life, I have only pursued Dharma practice and tried in every best possible way to abstain from perpetrating negative actions by applying the utmost mindfulness; however, I have also accepted much material wealth offered by faithful devotees and I have bound animals into servitude and exploited them [such as riding horses, etc] during my journeys. In order to purify myself of the sins I have accrued and, moreover, as I am now old and there is no certainty about my life anymore, I must now abandon all the wealth, whether small or great, that is in my possession.

With this feeling in his mind, he decided to leave for Punakha after making the necessary preparations. At Punakha, he requested the monk community to perform the ritual ceremony of Vajra-Akṣobhya – the Maṇḍala for purifying the lower realms. For three days, he served the entire monk community tea and dishes in a consummate manner. At the end of the ritual ceremony, he made offerings in cash liberally. He also presented many gifts to the ruling hierarchs. To all the temples, he made abundant offerings in cash, and also presented incense and butter lamps. At that time, the people were attracted by material donations rather than Dharma.

Just then, the spiritual master Tenzin Döndrub who was in the capital came to meet Jamgön. Through indivisible pure vision, they expressed to each other their feelings of delight and discussed religious matters. The spiritual master was not able to speak clearly since he had a sore throat, so Jamgön was not able to hear properly what he said. With great regret, Jamgön returned to his residence and shed tears. At that time the precentor Jinpa Drukgyal submitted: "O Lopön, what happened?" "Due to my lesser fortune, when I get an opportunity to meet such a sublime being as Tenzin Döndrub, I am not able to ask Dharma questions; it seems that I must have committed many evil deeds", Jamgön answered.

Around that time, the government dispatched troops in order to invade some regions of Sikkim and the situation was tense. A fierce battle ensued in which many were killed turning the entire region into the land

of a demoness.[256] Though they did not have enough to eat themselves, out of love for their departed ones and with eyes full of tears of lamentation, people came to Jamgön in large numbers to burn name-inscriptions of the deceased, offer merit transference and aspiration prayers. Jamgön performed an Aksobhya ritual – the Maṇḍala for the purification of the lower samsaric realms one thousand times including a fire pūjā for the sake of those who had perished in the war.

2. Continuing Dharma Activities, and Illness

The 9th Desi, geshe Ngawang Gyamtsho[257] issued an order for the fabrication of a huge silk brocade thongdrol (mthong grol), a wall-thangka of Avalokiteśvara for the Punakha Dzong. When the thongdrol had been successfully completed in the early winter, the 9th Desi sent his messenger to invite Jamgön for the consecration ceremony. Having accepted the invitation Jamgön, accompanied by Śākya Rinchen, proceeded to Punakha where he met the ruling hierarch.[258] During conversation over tea, some of the monks submitted a request to Jamgön: "Lama Khenchen[259] intends to invite you to his residence tomorrow."

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256 It was in 1725–26, during the reign of the 9th Desi Ngag-dbang rgya-mtsho that Bhutan invaded Sikkim due to lingering border disputes (during the reign of 'Gyur-med rNam-rgyal, the 4th Chos-rgyal of Sikkim). See also mKhan-po Chos-dbang 2003: 141–45.

257 *dGe bshes* Ngag-dbang rgya-mtsho (rg. 1719/20–29) came from Wang Tsha-lu-na and he was enrolled in the monk body at an early age. He became sDe-srid in 1720, after 'Brug rab-rgyas had been assassinated. But the civil war which had started during the rule of the previous *sDe srid* erupted again, more violently than before, over the question of the succession of the new Zhabs-drung. He was killed in action during the civil war in 1729. He reportedly was a deeply religious man and scholar. He is particularly known for his promotion of block-printing in Bhutan; see *Druk Dron* 305–309.

258 See *SRNT* Sect. GA 15a3ff.

259 The 6th rJe mKhan-po Ngag-dbang lhun-grub (rg. 1724–30) was born in 1670 into the family of lCang-sgang-kha *chos rje* line, the descendants of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom zhig-po. At the age of 10, he entered the monkhood. He received his novice vow from mKhan-chen bSod-nams 'od-zer, and subsequently received his monk ordination from the Vinaya-holder Śā-kya 'od-zer. He received teachings of the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud from rGyal-sras bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas and others and in 1724, at the age of 55, he was installed as the 6th rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan. He ruled

Since Jamgön was totally unstained by the Eight Worldly Dharmas[260] he said: "Whilst all are above me, lower than me is only the flowing stream, so how can I be worthy enough to be invited by [such a high Lama like] him? I myself will go and see him today." Jamgön himself went to see the Je Khenpo.

The Je Khenpo, garbed in his formal robe, personally came to the gate holding incense in his hands in order to receive the guest. A very high seat was prepared. Inquiring about Jamgön's well-being, the Je Khenpo treated him in the most polite way, entertaining him and serving him tea. Jamgön immediately confided:

> Khenpo, it is improper that you have made this arrangement. Since it is an indication of a pure vision, why would I not be happy when you have arranged a high seat for me? Sitting on this high seat only will make me look like a great lord of refuge which I am certainly not; when such a high seat is not arranged even for higher lamas, how can I deserve this? Please do not treat me in this way in the future.

But the Je Khenpo only replied, "If I do not set up auspicious circumstances for you, then for whom shall I set up such an arrangement?"

With the entire central tower of the Dzong magnificently decorated, the consecration ritual dedicated to Cakrasaṃvara was performed by the great monk community, presided over by Ngawang Chogley Namgyal and Jamgön. Jamgön too was treated most respectfully, an honour equal to that accorded to the Je Khenpo. Whatever material offerings he received during this ceremony, they traded to silver, out of which they made a statue of Avalokiteśvara one cubit tall (i.e. measuring the length from elbow to tip of the middle finger). The statue was then offered to the monk community as their main sacred object of worship.

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for six years and passed away while still on the throne. Cf. *LCB–II* 143a1–b1.

260 The eight wordly dharmas (*'jig rten chos brgyad*) for an ordinary person: 1. Gain (*rnyed pa*), 2. Loss (*ma rnyed pa*), 3. Reputation (*snyan pa*), 4. Infamy (*mi snyan*), 5. Praise (*bstod pa*), 6. Degradation (*smad pa*), 7. Pleasure (*bde ba*), 8. Misery (*mi bde ba*).



Fig. 89 Lunggiphu Lhakhang today known by Phu Lhakhang in Gasa. Photo: Daza

Jamgön returned to Chökor Dorjeden at Seula. At that time, a temple known as Lunggiphu (Lung-gi-phu)[261] in Gasa (mGar-sa) had undergone renovation, and when the work was finished the Dzongpön of Gasa and the devoted patrons repeatedly sent letters inviting Jamgön to preside over the consecration ceremony. Accompanied by his younger brother *chöje* [Ngawang Phüntshog?], Jamgön travelled via Gön Tshephuk (dGon Tshe-phug),[262] to Trashi Thongmön (bKra-shis mThong-smon) in Gasa. The Dzongpön, monks and patrons received Jamgön on arrival and treated him with deep respect. The consecration ceremony began with the performance of the Cakrasaṃvara ritual for three days

261 This temple is one of the oldest in mGar-sa and local tradition holds that it is one of the *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul* temples founded by the Tibetan King Srong-bstan sgam-po in the 7th century. It was later extended and rebuilt by his pupil *dge slong* A-wa-du-ti-pa Rin-chen rnam-rgyal, disciple of *rGyal-dbang-rje Kun*-dga' dpal-'byor (1428–1476). It is located about 15 minutes' walk from the mGar-sa bKra-shis mThong-smon rDzong. Known by the name Phu Lha-khang today, it is under the custody of the mGar-sa Rab-sde. See *TRNT* 210a6–211a1.

262 This is a sacred site associated with Guru Rin-po-che. It is locally known by dGon Tshe-phug and is one of the four caves prophesied by the Guru to Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom zhig-po while in meditation at sTag-tshang. See Dargye and Sørensen 2001: 18-19.

and during this time Jamgön blessed the temple and its many sacred objects. He offered a thanksgiving ritual and entrusted the temple's safekeeping to the protective deity. Subsequently, he performed for three days the Tsechu based on the Lama Gongdü (Bla ma dGongs 'dus) [a celebrated cycle ascribed to Sangs-rgyas gling-pa], at the end of which he gave authorization teachings to all the people gathered there including the Dzongpön. Then he gave the empowerment of longevity to the residents of the Dzong, and gave reading transmissions according to their wishes. He also performed religious services concerning the propitiation of protective deities, the ritual of summoning prosperity (*gyang 'gugs*) of [Trashi] Tsheringma, and so forth, and fulfilled the wishes and aspirations of all the patrons.

Afterwards Jamgön visited the local medicinal thermal spring (*sman chu*),[263] where he stayed for three days. He then set off on the return journey, stopping en route at Gön Tshephug where he visited pilgrimage sites and also bestowed the longevity empowerment upon a certain Mangti lama (Mang-ti bla-ma) and upon benefactors. Thereafter, he proceeded to his retreat residence at Seula. Immediately after his arrival there, he received from Tenzin Döndrub, who was at that time residing at Zabdön Lhüntse [Wangdütse] in Thimphu, excellent presents which included a statue of Amitayus, a miniature image (*phyag tsha*) of Zhabdrung Rinpoche, as well as silk cloths and silver, along with a long-life prayer.

At the request of the Desi, he made preparations to perform for the well-being of the country a fierce ritual of exorcism (i.e. suppress, burn and discharge - *mnan sreg 'phang gsum*) for three days based on the Maṇḍala of Gönpo Gongdü. Before commencing the ritual, Jamgön thought that he would not make a huge magic-weapon *torma* [as was the usual practice] but only a smaller one. That night he had a dream in which he saw the yogi Vajra-rakṣaṣa *ngagchang* Tenpa Gyamtsho (*sngags 'chang* bsTan-pa rgya-mtsho) offering him a huge red *torma* (*dmar gtor*). After seeing this in his dream, Jamgön was said to have

263 This thermal spring which is known by Bya-rgod sMan-chu is located towards the north of mGar-sa hot spring.

abandoned the earlier plan and to have instead made a huge *torma* for the ritual. He performed the Vajra-Akṣobhya ritual – the Maṇḍala for the purification of the lower realms – one thousand times including a fire pūjā.

Jamgön's brother Chung Rinpoche Ngawang Pekar then left for Taktshang, where he had been appointed head of the monastery. Upon the invitation of the government, Jamgön returned to Punakha during the winter. As desired by Chogley Namgyal, Jamgön gave empowerment and teachings to him. He met Tenzin Döndrub who was there at that time, and from him received the teachings on a Section of the Dharma Feast (*tshogs chos)* of Gampopa and of the Equal Taste (*ro snyoms*).[264] Subsequently, Jamgön offered these teachings to Chogley Namgyal.

The Desi Ngawang Gyamtsho served Jamgön excellently and treated him with great respect. On the former's request, Jamgön presided over the ritual performance of the Wrathful Guṛu (*gu ru drag po*) cycle according to the system of Nyangral Nyima Yözer (Myang-ral Nyi-ma 'Od-zer; 1136–1204)[265] which was being conducted over two days by about one hundred monks in the Kagyad Lhakhang. The nectar in the skull-cup (kapāla) boiled and became even more tasty, an auspicious sign for the ritual performance. The Desi offered a large amount of presents to Jamgön. Jamgön made dedication and aspiration prayers in an elaborate way. He also presided over the *zhugdrel* ceremony during the New Year. During the ceremony, he was not only highly honoured and respected but also entertained with songs on themes such as, 'Invitation from the Lower Realms (*ngan song yar 'dren*) and the Perfect Teacher, Ngawang Gyaltshen.' Around that time *jetsün* Ngawang Thinley, who had been head of the monastery at Taktshang in Paro, arrived at Punakha after having given up his responsibility to Jamgön's brother.[266]

264 See Dargye and Sørensen 2001: 12.

265 It refers to a celebrated cycle of this early rNying-ma-pa master with the title *Gu ru drag po bDe gshegs 'dus pa*; see e.g. *Myang gter gu ru drag po bde gshegs 'dus pa'i bsnyen pa'i yi ge mdor dril ba 'khrul rtog bdud las rnam rgyal* (ed. Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, Paro 1976–80).

266 Also see *SHRNT* Sect. GA 15a6–b1.

At that point in time, the traditional [Drukpa] ritual and liturgical tradition [of yore] had deteriorated, and largely been replaced by a self-fabricated or home-grown practice (*rang bzor spyod pa*). Concerned about this, the Desi and Je Khenpo now commanded some elderly monks in the monastic body including the precentor Jinpa Drukgyal to receive appropriate instruction on tonal recitation and on root verses of rituals from Jamgön, in order to restore the original practice. Accordingly, Jamgön took up this noble task and taught them well. It is said that this helped prevent further deterioration of these old traditions.

Before leaving his bodily form, *drubwang* Yeshe Ngödrub left his will saying: "After I have passed away, you must invite the matchless Sublime Lord of Dharma, Jamgön to preside over my funeral rites." Jamgön accordingly was invited to preside over the funeral. However, although requested by the ruling hierarchs he was unable to go, since he had caught a viral illness (*rims tshad*). He expressed his deep regret at not being able to attend, and instead forwarded aspiration prayers.

Jamgön then returned to his retreat residence at Seula. There, at the request of his disciples, he bestowed empowerment and initiation. Subsequent to this, he had a volume of *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra* (*mdo bskal bzang;* the Sūtra of the Good Aeon) brought up from the capital Punakha to his retreat residence.

After having made proper preparation, Jamgön again returned to Punakha. With the offerings he received, he commenced the recitation of the *maṇi*-mantra one billion times by the congregation of monks for ten days, putting on display hundreds of offerings during the ceremony. At the end, he made offerings of one silver coin and a long piece of cloth to each of those who had attended the recitation. To each of the temples starting from Künra Lhakhang, he made many offerings, including one hundred butter lamps, incense, flowers, and cash-offerings.

Having had five [main] treasure objects[267] brought to the outer cell of Zhabdrung Rinpoche's chamber in Punakha Dzong, Jamgön meditated there for a few days to accomplish the ritual service (*bsnyen pa*) of Wrathful Guru according to the system of Myangral Nyima Yözer. At the end, he bestowed the empowerment upon the Desi, who in return made many offerings and vowed to support the mantra recitation of Wrathful Guru at Namgyaltse, and also the writing of Känjur and other meritorious acts. Having performed the 'vase consecration' to repel curses (*byad grol gyi bum sgrub*) over several days, Jamgön conducted the "cleansing ritual" (*khrus gsol*) in all the temples. Then only did he return to his retreat residence at Seula.

Not long afterwards, Jamgön again fell seriously ill. Chogley Namgyal who was in retreat at Cheri sent long-life prayers along with presents, and the Desi also sent prayers together with offerings from the capital. *Chöje* Ngawang Sönam was especially dispatched to deliver the prayers and presents. On receiving these, Jamgön was extremely pleased and laughingly said to *chöje*, "Although I have not committed any negative actions and only practised Dharma throughout my entire life, still when I think of death I become scared. I suppose, no serious harm will come to me this time." Soon after, he made a complete recovery from his illness. He again performed the Vajra-Akṣobhya ritual – the Maṇḍala for the purification of the lower realms – this time two thousand times, together with the fire pūjā and the guru pūjā one thousand times. On the Tenth Day of the Fourth Month in the Earth Monkey Year (corresponding to 1728), he bestowed the authorization teachings of the Guru upon about three hundred devotees.

267 The five *gter ma* or *sku tshab gter lnga* comprise "supports," i.e. receptacles representing body, speech, mind as well as aspects such as quality and action (*sku gsung thugs yon tan phrin las kyi rten*): the body or corporeal receptacles are objects such as statues made from the five precious metals; speech or verbal receptacles refer to statues and idols made from medicinal substances such as Thalictrum aquilegifolium (meadow rue); *a krong*); the mind type or mental receptacles refer to statues made from an alloy of "dark bronze" (*'khar nag*); the so-called quality-type receptacles refer to statues or idols made from gold and finally the "action"-type receptacles refer to statues made from stainless crystal.

In the Earth-Male-Bird Year (corresponding to 1729), he again returned to Punakha upon the invitation of the government to perform a cleansing ritual for the Je Khenpo Ngawang Lhündrub, who was indisposed due to a sore throat. After having performed the vase-consecration for a few days, he conducted the cleansing ritual for the Je Khenpo. Having been tainted (*snyad langs*) by the burning of one name inscription (*byang bu bsreg*) [of a dead person], Jamgön had fallen sick; however, he recovered slightly after taking holy vase-water (*bum chu*) and nectar of the Grand Ceremony of the Accomplishment and Offering of Cakrasaṃvara, performed in the middle winter month.

Jamgön's condition became serious and he returned to his retreat residence at Seula. Upon the arrival of his brother Chung Rinpoche Ngawang Pekar, who had resigned from the post of Taktshang Lama, many religious rituals were conducted to help Jamgön recover, while at the same time long-life prayers were offered by all his disciples and devotees; and indeed, Jamgön recovered fully from his illness.

A factional feud broke out at the capital. As the saying goes, "when water is not at peace, fish also will not be at peace" *(chu ma bde na nya mi bde)*,[268] even those in the mountain retreat were compelled to cut short their retreat and break the session. Unable to bear the situation, many high lamas, including Jamgön and his brother, travelled all the way to the capital, Punakha on two separate occasions to try to mediate a peaceful settlement of the conflict, but all in vain. During this period of turmoil, Jamgön had to sleep in a wet place for two nights and moreover, due to different kinds of negative influences, such as mental hindrance, samaya-violation-defilement and so forth, he again fell sick. Due to an adverse reaction to his medication, he was on the verge of death and could not take even a drop of water, let alone porridge or solid food; at that time all his attendants were extremely disturbed, acting like fish

268 The Tibetan military insurgencies and invasions of Thim-phu, sPu-ṇa-kha and sPa-ro regions in 1729–30 forced the monk community, led by rJe mKhan-po, to temporarily seek refuge at dBang-'dus Pho-drang. The description of Bhutan and the Bhutanese delivered by mDo-mkhar in *Mi dBang rTogs brjod* [B 748f] is far from flattering.

which had been thrown onto the sand (*nya bye tshan la bton pa bzhin*), and tearfully lamenting the situation. Nevertheless, however seriously ill he was, Jamgön remained in deep contemplation, rays of compassion shining forth from his face, which was as white as the full moon.

One day, Jamgön's condition turned to the worse, and simultaneously various auspicious signs including rainbows indicated that he was about to die. At that time, everyone became frightened and confused. Chung Rinpoche Ngawang Pekar performed a cleansing ceremony based on a Curse-repelling Ritual (*byad grol*) and Vidarana (*rnam 'joms*), as well as making confession, realizing that the cause [for the illness] was the wrath (*'khu ldog*) of the Ḍākinī-s (female tantric deities) and other Protectors. Jamgön's followers conducted as many longevity prayers as they could; and because of these religious performances, he recovered from his illness.

After his recovery, Jamgön performed the ritual of Vajra-Akṣobhya - the Maṇḍala for the purification of the lower realms – two thousand times together with fire pūjā, and the rituals of the Six Classes of Guru (*bla ma rigs drug pa'i dkyil chog*) one thousand times. Around that time, as a part of his meritorious performance, he sent prayer-flags together with aspiration prayers to Tsari and many precious gold and silver offerings to Phodrang Yutsho [Ma-phang g.Yu-mtsho?] through pilgrims. Also around that time and at other times, he sent gold (*zhal gser*), cash and butter lamp offerings for the Two Jowo Brothers[269] [in Lhasa, Tibet].

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269 The two brothers are the celebrated and imperial-time statues of Buddha Śākyamuni and Akṣobhya kept in the Jo-khang and Ra-mo-che shrines in Lha-sa.

Chapter IX

THE FINAL YEARS: HANDING ON THE TORCH

1. Root-Lama to the Three Sublime Incarnations (*Chogtrul Rinpoche Namsum*)[270]

Gyalse Trülku Jigme Norbu (rGyal sras sprul sku 'Jigs-med nor-bu; rg. 1717–1735)[271] was enthroned as the 2nd incarnation of Gyalse Jampel Dorje by the great monk community and people amidst a grand

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270 The three subblime incarnations or mChog-sprul rin-po-che rnam-gsum were: the 1st Zhabs-drung *gSung-sprul* Ngag-dbang Phyogs-las rnam-rgyal (1708–1735), the 2nd rGyal-sras *sPrul-sku* 'Jigs-med rnam-rgyal nor-bu (1717–1735) and the 3rd Khri-sprul [i.e. *mChog-sprul*] Ngag-dbang bstan-'dzin Mi-pham dbang-po (1709–1738).

271 He was recognized as the second incarnation of the son of the founder Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che, Ngag-dbang 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje (1631–1681). He was born to the sBon-sbis *chos-rje* in Krong-gsar in 1717. He took his monk initiation under the 5th rJe mKhan-po bZod-pa 'phrin-las (rg: 1707–1724) and was installed on the golden throne at the age of 13 in 1729. He received 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud teachings from Byams-mgon, from sGang-sprul bsTan-'dzin legs-don (1645–1726) and from *yongs 'dzin* Ngag-dbang 'phrin-las (1668–1747). He passed away at age of 19, while on the throne.



Fig. 90 Gyalse Trülku Jigme Norbu (1717–1735) from a wall painting at Punakha Dzong. Photo: Daza



Fig. 91 Punakha Dzong today. Photo: Daza

ceremonial procession in 1729.[272] Auspicious offerings from all levels of society were presented, all wishing him a prosperous rule, stability and a long-life on the golden throne. *Jetsün* Ngawang Thinley was appointed as the personal tutor to Gyalse Trülku.

At that time, messengers from Ladakh arrived at the capital [Punakha]. They had an audience with Jamgön, to whom they presented a letter of goodwill and wonderful presents sent by the King and Royal Family [of Ladakh] which included a blossoming saffron plant, a saffron-coloured woollen robe, a one-hundred-bead coral rosary and a coat made of silk brocade. Having bestowed upon them aspiration prayers and excellent gifts, Jamgön sent a sealed letter of thanks, sacred pills and so forth to the King and his ministers.

Jamgön also received from Tenpa Tshering (bsTan-pa Tshe-ring), the nephew of King Sangay Tenpa of Derge [Kham], who had now ascended the throne, thirty measures of gold and lengths of cloth together with a letter. He continuously received gifts and respect from all quarters.

272 See *SRNT* Sect. NGA 9a6ff.



Fig 92 Jowo Śākyamuni in the central tower at Punakha Dzong. It is said to have been executed by Jamgön personally. Photo: Daza

Nevertheless, he remained free from attachment and, since for him gold and stone were of equal value, he donated the gifts to the monk community for their well-being.

Jamgön travelled to a hot spring in Gasa. He stayed there for a couple of days since it proved healthful to him, and during that time he was served and honoured by many devotees. After leaving Gasa, he travelled to his birthplace, Amorimu. In the Gönkhang of his forefathers, he made prayer offerings, and also offered cash, a brocade canopy, scarves, and so forth [to the protective deity] in the Gönkhang. Jamgön then proceeded to Chökhor Dorjeden at Seula, where he suffered slightly from sores on his feet, but soon recovered.

Gyalse Trülku knew that there was none more highly regarded than Jamgön. He sent an urgent letter inviting him to Punakha. Jamgön was brought to Punakha carried in a palanquin. When he arrived at the capital, an elaborate *zhugdrel* ceremony was held in the central tower of the Dzong, the seat of the self-created (*rang-byon*) Khasarpaṇi. He was received by the Dzongzin and by the monks. There in the temple of Rangjön Khasarpani, Jamgön met the two incarnate brothers[273] – Gyalse Trülku Jigme Norbu and Mipham Wangpo (Mi-pham dbang-po; 1709–1738), [i.e. Thritrul Rinpoche].[274] Gyalse Trülku greeted Jamgön by slightly extending his hands while Thritrul Rinpoche and Jamgön greeted each other, then all sat on thrones of equal height. In Jamgön's honour, a *zhugdrel* ceremony was held, during which a variety of food

273 'Jigs-med nor-bu, the 2nd incarnation of *rgyal-sras* 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje and Mi-pham dbang-po, the 3rd incarnation of rGyal sras bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas were born to the same parents at Bon-sbis in Krong-gsar. In the text, they were usually addressed as "*mChog sprul sku mched*," or the "Two Brothers of Sublime Incarnation." The former was the younger.

274 He was recognized as the 3rd incarnation of bsTan-'dzin rab-rgyas and was born to the sBon-sbis *chos rje* in Krong-gsar in 1709. He received his monk initiation from rJe bZod-pa 'phrin-las, and then received teachings and precepts of both 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud and rNying-ma under various masters such as Ngag-dbang rgyal-mtshan,sGang-sprul bsTan-'dzin legs-don, Yongs-'dzin Ngag-dbang lhun-grub and Ngag-dbang 'phrin-las. He became a learned master. He was enthroned as the 10th sDe-srid of Bhutan at the age of 21. After his brother 'Jigs-med nor-bu's passing away, he retired from the post of sDe-srid and went to rTa-mgo where he died at the age of 30. *LCB–II*: 260–62.

was served. Gyalse Trülku inquired of Jamgön about his health, and they conversed with one another on religious matters. At that time, Je Khenpo Ngawang Lhündrub, who was undergoing strict meditative retreat, heard of Jamgön's arrival, and when he had completed his retreat he came to see Jamgön.

Jamgön expressed his inability to grant teachings to the two incarnate brothers, Gyalse Trülku and Thritrul Rinpoche, and to others, due to his poor health; but upon the brothers' insistence Jamgön acceded to their request. In the temple where many sacred objects were housed, Jamgön thus turned the wheel of Dharma of the Drukpa Kagyud tradition as practised by their forefathers for the benefit of future beings, first giving them the four complete empowerments into the Thirteen-Deity [Maṇḍala] of Cakrasaṃvara according to the Nāropa tradition[275] and then introducing their minds to the intrinsic awareness of the Co-emergent Wisdom of Mahāmudrā. Jamgön thus became the Root-Lama of the two incarnate brothers.

The biography in particular describes how Gyalse Trülku observed perfect religious conduct while receiving profound teachings from Jamgön. Avoiding the source of four doors of downfalls as it is said,[276] he listened to the teachings attentively, considering himself to be the patient, the dharma to be the medicine, the spiritual teacher to be the skilled physician, and finally the constant practice to be the appropriate treatment that would certainly cure the disease [of unenlightenment].

Around that time, Ngawang Lhündrub, the 6th Je Khenpo (rg. 1724–1730) passed away in 1730 while still reigning. *Jetsün* Ngawang Thinley was then enthroned as the 7th Je Khenpo (rg. 1730–1738)[277] amidst a grand

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275 It refers to the contemplative practice of the visualization and empowerment rite (*dbang chog, abhiṣekavidhi*) of the Thirteen-Deity tantric Saṃvara cycle according to Nāropa; see Padma dkar-po, *bDe mchog lha bcu gsum ma nā ro lugs kyi 'khor lo'i khrid* and the 13th rJe mkhan-po Yon-tan mtha'-yas (1724-84), *bDe mchog lha bcu gsum ma nā ro lugs kyi dbang chog*; the latter being pupil of Śā-kya rin-chen.

276 The four root downfalls or transgressions of a monk's vows are: 1. taking life (*srog gcod pa*), 2. taking what is not given (*ma byin par len pa*), 3. indulging in sexual misconduct (*mi tshang par spyod pa*) and 4. lying (*brdzun smra ba*).

277 He was born in 1668 in the family of Wa-chen *zhal ngo*, the descendant of Pha-

ceremony at Punakha. At the same time, an epidemic broke out amongst the monk community. Gyalse Trülku desired to go to Jamgön's retreat residence at Seula to escape from the epidemic and Jamgön set off ahead of Gyalse Trülku to his retreat residence to prepare for Gyalse Trülku's arrival. Subsequently, Gyalse Trülku accompanied by *jetsün* Ngawang Thinley and their attendants arrived at Seula. Jamgön extended a warm welcome to them and taught the ritual intonation of the Maṇḍala rituals to Gyalse Trülku and *jetsün* Ngawang Thinley.

Gyalse Trülku returned to Punakha. Soon afterwards, Jamgön was invited to Punakha by the government. It was at that time that Jamgön consecrated the newly built *Stūpa* of the Type for Repairing Schisms (*dbyen zlum*, *antaryāna*) which had been erected outside the Dzong. He continued to give teachings to Gyalse Trülku and others; he again became severely ill due to food poisoning, the illness exacerbated due to his advanced age. Worried about how very ill Jamgön was, Gyalse Trülku offered prayers for his long-life involving extensive material offerings. Slightly recovered, Jamgön left for his retreat residence at Seula. He performed the Vajra-Akṣobhya – Maṇḍala for purifying the lower realms one thousand times, and the ritual of Guru Worship involving aspiration prayers and fire pūjā, after which he fully recovered and was able to return to Punakha.

In the presence of sacred images in the temple at Punakha Dzong, Gyalse Trülku took the Pratimokṣa and novice monk vows with Jamgön acting as the preceptor in 1729. Jamgön conducted the hair-cutting ceremony and then named him Mipham Jigme Namgyal Norbu (Mi-pham 'Jigs-med rnam-rgyal nor-bu). From that time on, except for teachings related

jo 'Brug-sgom zhig-po. He entered monkhood at his early age and received his monastic vows from *mKhan-chen* bSod-nams 'od-zer and Śā-kya 'od-zer. He received teachings and initiations mainly from Pad-dkar lhun-grub. Later he became tutor to 'Jigs-med nor-bu, the 2nd rGyal-sras incarnation. He was enthroned as the 7th rJe mKhan-po of Bhutan in 1730 and reigned for six years whereafter he retired, passing away at the age of 79. For ref. see *LCB–II* 143b2–144a3. For further details, see his biography titled, "*rDo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun Ngag-dbang 'phrin-las kyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa rgyal sras rtse dga'i 'khri shing.*" (In: Biographies of Three Bhutanese Prelates, 1976).

to Känjur, Jamgön gave whatever teachings he had received, without exception, to Gyalse Trülku.

At that point, the time again had come for the great monk community along with the Je Khenpo to move to their summer residence, Trashichödzong in Thimphu. Although Jamgön wanted to leave for his retreat residence, on the command of Gyalse Trülku, he had to follow the monk community to Thimphu, ahead of the entourage of the hierarchs (*gong sa mchod yon*; [presumably the two incarnate brothers]). The hierarchs and their retinues were not able to proceed to Thimphu, turning back on receiving news of political strife in Thimphu and Paro. For the time being, the two incarnate brothers went instead to Wangdü Phodrang. Later on, when Thimphu Dromchö[278] was imminent, Thritul Rinpoche Mipham Wangpo proceeded to Trashichödzong. There he met with Jamgön, who offered to Thritrul Rinpoche in great detail the empowerment and instruction of Wrathful Kilaya envisioned by *künkhyen* Pemakarpo, the Black Hayagrīva according to the system of Myangral Nyima Yözer, Vajrabhairava according to the system of Rva Lotsawa (*rva lugs*), and the authorization teaching of Lhamo Düsolma and so forth.

Jamgön went in the company of Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley to Rinpung Dzong in Paro for reconciliation, but they had to return abruptly to Thimphu, since the political strife had grown worse. Feeling extremely compassionate towards both the perpetrators of bad actions and those who had suffered ill treatment, Jamgön spoke of many issues related to worldly renunciation and his weariness of worldly life. At that time, the author Śākya Rinchen was also in Jamgön's presence reading the Känjur, and Jamgön related to him the benefits of perfect reading and the defects of imperfect reading, particularly speaking of cause and effect as gleaned from the Sūtra of the Confession of Kauśika (*Ka'u-shi-ka'i bshags mdo*).

278 Dromchoe [= *sgrub mchod*] at bKra-shis chos rDzong, Thim-phu, is specifically dedicated to dPal-ldan lha-mo (Śrī Devī), and was first introduced by Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1689–1713), the 1st incarnation of 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje (1631–1681), son of Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal.

Once, looking at the biographical *thangka* of Jowo Nāropa, Jamgön told Śākya Rinchen with tears in his eyes: "We must all follow the same ideal life pursued by Nāropa; to allow ourselves to sink down in the muddy swamp of indolence is simply too embarrassing."

Śākya Rinchen was regularly attending upon his Lama with ardent faith. Once he is said to have taken a cup full of water with which Jamgön had washed his face, and as a result of this all his discursive and wild thoughts were said to have instantly become calm, so that he could comprehend the ultimate nature of conceptual thought as the true nature of reality.

2. Final Activities

At that point, Bhutan again was invaded by the Tibetans, and Gyalse Trülku, together with the monk community led by Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley, left for their winter residence at Punakha, while Jamgön still remained in Thimphu. The entire Thimphu valley is said to have been flooded with invading troops, and temples and monasteries were destroyed, and many *chörtens* and meditation centres vandalized. Religious practitioners were robbed or bound into servitude. Even innocent animals did not escape persecution.[279] Despite such agonizing

279 Don-grub rgyal-po from sKar-sbis (Karbisa; sPu-ṇa-kha) revolted against the sDe-srid Mi-pham dbang-po, but unsuccessfully. Discontented with his defeat, he franctically applied for military aid from the Tibetan ruler bSod-nams stobs-rgyal Pho-lha-nas, who dispatched a contingent that crossed the frontier and joined forces with the rebel, Don-grub rgyal-po. The allied troops occupied 'Brug-rgyal and Rin-spungs rDzong in sPa-ro. A fierce battle is said to have been fought between the troops and the Bhutantese soldiers. It is reported that many people on both sides were killed in the encounter.

This Tibetan intrusion was said to have taken place in 1729 and fuelled great hostility between the two countries. Concerned about this development, a number of Tibetan leaders proposed to Pho-lha-nas that there should be a truce. The proposal being accepted, the Karma-pa Byang-chub rdo-rje and Zhva-dmar Chos-kyi don-grub were sent to Bhutan to sign the truce in sPu-ṇa-kha, on the Fourteeth Day of the Tenth Month of the Iron-Dog Year, corresponding to 1730, in the presence of the Tibetan representatives and Bhutanese leaders headed by the sDe-srid. Bhutan agreed to station a Bhutanese representative in Lhasa. Finally, peace was established between Tibet and Bhutan; the first Bhutanese representative in

troubles, Jamgön remained in Thimphu itself and he conducted dedication prayers *(bsngo ba smon lam)* for the sake of those who died in the warring conflict. When the hostilities subsided, he, too, went to Punakha where he was welcomed with high honour by the two incarnate brothers of Gyalse Trülku and Thritrul Rinpoche.

Jamgön's younger brother Ngawang Pekar who was residing at Chökhor Dorjeden suddenly fell sick. Since his condition turned to the worse, he thought that he was about to pass away; he therefore made offerings at Namgyaltse and Ngödrubchu Drubdey (dNgos-grub-chu sgrub-sde). He received a letter of acknowledgement concerning the gold that he had sent earlier to be offered to the Jowo Statue of Lhasa. He subsequently passed away. A 'merit-dedication request' *(bsngo zhu)* for the deceased was immediately brought to Jamgön; and was also offered to all lamas of Bhutan.

Jamgön himself conducted the dedication and aspiration prayers for his deceased brother; he made many offerings to the monk community and served them tea. Presided over by the Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley and other senior monks, funeral rites for Ngawang Pekar were performed, including ritual prayers dedicated to the Buddha Akṣobhya. Many additional ritual services were performed in memory of Ngawang Pekar. When Ngawang Pekar was still alive, he had begun to make copper statues of Guru Padmasambhava and of *drubchen* Terkhungpa but the work had not been completed before his sudden demise.[280] This task was now taken up by Jamgön who was able to complete it in a perfect manner, enshrining inside each statue many precious relics. Jamgön also consecrated the statue of Ngawang Pekar made from red sandalwood which had been erected by his nephew Ngawang Thinley.

Tibet was Tshe-ring dbang-chen, nephew of sDe-srid Mi-pham dbang-po. See *Druk Dron* 311–16.

280 These two statues could not be traced at present day Se'u-la. However, a statue of Padmasambhava made of copper was found in sKu-'bags lha-khang (See Fig. 74), but nobody could tell whether it was actually made by Ngag-dbang pad-dkar and Byams-mgon.

Jamgön admitted Śākya Rinchen into the monk community and provided him with ample necessary provisions as well as good advice on what to do and what not to do. Jamgön bestowed upon Thritrul Rinpoche instruction on esoteric practices of the Coemergent Union of Mahāmudrā.

On the Fifteenth Day of the First Month of the Iron-Female-Pig Year, corresponding to 1731, Gyalse Trülku Jigme Norbu finally received his full ordination with Jamgön acting as his preceptor in the presence of a congregation of monks. He then assumed the highest post in the country as the Gyaltshab of Bhutan. The occasion was celebrated with the making of elaborate offerings to the monk community. In the years following his full ordination, Gyalse Trülku's faith in and respect for the Je Khenpo, the Lopöns and the monk community became even more profound.

Gyalse Trülku commissioned the erection of an exquisite Buddha image two cubits high (i.e. measuring twice the length from elbow to tip of the middle finger), as well as a four-armed Mahākāla image made from copper which was one cubit high. To ensure completion of this noble undertaking, Jamgön also contributed thirteen *zho* (weight of a gold coin) of gold. It was then that the 12th Karmapa Jangchub Dorje (Byang-chub rdo-rje; 1703–1732) and the 8th Zhamarpa Chökyi Döndrub (Chos kyi don-grub; 1695–1732), accompanied by a wide circle of attendants, arrived at Punakha to sign the peace agreement with the Tibetans. They met with the two brothers, Gyalse Trülku Jigme Norbu and Thritrul Rinpoche Mipham Wangpo.

Although Jamgön wished to meet the Karmapa and the Zhamarpa in person, he was unable to do so on account of illness. Through one of his attendants, he therefore sent a silver cup and other presents to the two visiting guests. Both were highly pleased and inquired: "Is Apa Chöje in good health?" As a token of gratitude, they repaid Jamgön's friendliness by sending their own presents including a large brick of Chinese tea.

It was around that time [i.e. 1731] that Ngawang Chogley Namgyal wrote a highly eloquent versified biography of Jamgön to which he gave the title, "*mKhas btsun bzang po'i bdag nyid mtshungs med chos kyi rje Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan kyi rnam par thar pa'i rgya mtsho ngo mtshar gyi rba rlabs mngon par gyo ba.*" He forwarded it to Jamgön together with prayer offerings for Jamgön's long-life.[281]

As the winter season had now come to an end, Jamgön decided to leave for his retreat residence of Chökhor Dorjeden at Seula. Gyalse Trülku could not think of separating himself from Jamgön, as he felt he was like a son to Jamgön, who had proved to be as affectionate and generous to him as his own father; nonetheless with high respect, he accepted that Jamgön would leave. Gyalse Trülku invited Jamgön to visit him at his residence before he left. When Jamgön arrived, Gyalse Trülku seated him on a decorated throne and then made numerous offerings to him in including the Seven-chaptered Prayer of Longevity which he chanted with folded hands.

Jamgön left Punakha and arrived at his retreat residence where he remained in constant meditation. At this time he offered a silk brocade robe intricately patterned with golden dragons and a silk canopy to the Buddha image in the Eight-Pillared Temple (*ka brgyad lha khang*) in Wangdü Phodrang Dzong. After making proper preparations, he dispatched whatever offerings he had received from his devotees to Punakha for the performing of one billion *Maṇi*-mantra recitations. For ten days, the monks were served respectfully and to each of them he offered one and a half *ngultrum* [i.e. one and a half coins] and apart from the robe that Jamgön was wearing himself, everything else without exception was presented to the monk community. Excellent gifts were presented to the two incarnate brothers and to Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley.

Invited by the government, Jamgön again came down to the capital Punakha. He commissioned the replacing of the old roofing shingles of

281 See *SHRNT* CA 4b1–2.

the central tower. He also offered a fine woollen robe to Gyalse Trülku. Gyalse Trülku requested Jamgön to give the reading transmission of the Känjur. Jamgön said: "I am not only very old but also visually impaired; earlier I had no problem. Whatever it may be, I shall try my best to carry it out." Having spoken thus, he offered the reading transmission of the *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra* and the *Lalitavistara-sūtra* (*rGya cher rol pa*; Sūtra of the Vast Display).

Noticing Jamgön's remarkable reading speed, Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley briefly commented: "Now [it seems that] you have restored yourself to a younger age for the benefit of sentient beings." Jamgön replied: "Earlier, when I read Dharma texts, I would never fall asleep, but now I do; it seems that now the time has arrived for me to die."

Then, as an auspicious sign, Jamgön said that he would begin with reading transmission of the 'Ka' Section [of the Känjur]. He spoke thus because he had a premonition that he would not be able to complete the reading transmission of the entire work before he passed away.

Due to his spiritual maturity, his countenance became brighter and he looked more healthy; some of his hair, which earlier was grey, now turned black; formerly he had not a single tooth [in his mouth], but now, two pearl-coloured teeth shaped like a *chörten* appeared in his mouth; while giving transmission, though earlier he could not read more than one hundred pages in a day as he became tired, miraculously he could now accomplish one hundred pages within a short span of time. To many people, this was a sign that he would not pass away soon.

The disciples requested Jamgön to prolong his life and continue to work for the well-being of sentient beings, to which Jamgön replied:

> I do not know whether my activities have benefited sentient beings or not during my life; now of my life span there remains only this much, even if I live long, so it will be difficult to [further] benefit sentient beings. You therefore should not let yourselves be influenced by disturbing emotions; since Dharma without meditation will not help in attaining enlightenment, carry on with your practice assiduously. Since the root of blessing is your own lama, pray to your lama with devotion; it is pointless to talk about other issues.

As armed skirmishes between Bhutan and Tibet were still continuing, the two incarnate brothers, the Je Khenpo and the monk community were unable to move to their summer residence in Thimphu, and had to spend the entire summer in Wangdü Phodrang where Jamgön was also residing. At that time, for no particular reason, he recounted again and again how Buddha Maitreya had passed into Nirvāṇa and in particular, he visualized the Eastern Realm of Abhirati or'True Joy', saying: "The former Kagyud Masters are residing in the Realm of 'True Joy' so shall I also go there."

3. Death and Funeral

One day, Jamgön counted the number of prayer recitations that he had carried out during his life time: 128,342,000 recitations (*dung 'phyur gcig bye ba gnyis sa ya brgyad 'bum gsum bzhi khri nyis stong*) of the mantra of the Seven-Syllable Cakrasaṃvara; 151,368,000 recitations (*dung 'phur gcig bye lnga sa ya gcig 'bum gsum drug khri brgyad stong*) of the mantra of the Six-Syllable *Maṇi*; additionally 29,677,000 (*bye ba gnyis sa ya dgu 'bum drug bdun khri bdun stong*) recitations of the mantra of the Wrathful Guru.

He fully completed his accomplishment meditation *(bsnyen sgrub)* on the Thirteen Deities of the Maṇḍala of Cakrasaṃvara, Buddha Amitayus, Hayagrīva, Vajra-Akṣobhya for purifying the lower realms, and accomplished the required number of recitations. Although he had not kept a record, he had recited the prayer of Lokeśvara dedicated to the Zhabdrung Rinpoche, the *Mañjūśrīnāmasamgīti*, the Ārya Bhadracārīpraṇidhāna-rāja, Confession of Downfalls (*lTung bshags*), dedicated to Goddess Tārā and the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdāya* as many times as possible during his daily prayers.

Whatever offerings came from the devotees, he would not take so much as a strand of hair (*spu tsam*) for personal use, but would donate the offerings in their entirety to the monastic community and for other virtuous purposes. Even offerings of cash and textiles were used to

meet the daily subsistence needs of those in mountain retreats, who were requested to recite *maṇi*-mantra running into more than two billion times; whatever cloth he had received as "merit-transference request" (*bsngo zhus*) was used to make prayer-flags which numbered up to one million. Although he was continuously visited by waves of devout visitors day and night, he would always give precepts and instructions with a smile of delight, without showing even the slightest reluctance or weariness and would act in accordance with their wishes.

Jamgön's health started to weaken. Although the two incarnate brothers, Gyalse Trülku and Thritrul Rinpoche had performed rites for Jamgön's personal well-being, his health did not show any improvement. Likewise, Chogley Namgyal and Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley, and also government officials extended their prayers of longevity.

Jamgön's condition now turned serious. Gyalse Trülku made prayers of longevity many times to his Lama as: "O Sacred Object of Refuge! For the mercy and for the sake of beings of this degenerate time including myself, who are weary of suffering, may your life be long!" Gyalse Trülku requested his Lama again and again to prolong his life. Although worn down, weak and fatigued due to his illness, Jamgön glanced at Gyalse Trülku and burst into tears of affection. Since he knew truly his life was finally approaching its end, Jamgön could not accede to Gyalse Trülku's request.

The biographer Śākya Rinchen, too, spent time with Jamgön. Truly anguished, he fell at Jamgön's feet out of intense devotion, and prayed: "In this life and in succeeding life-times, I have no other refuge and protection to rely upon but only you, therefore look upon me compassionately!"[282]

As his time to enter into Parinirvāṇa drew near, Jamgön left Wangdü Phodrang for his retreat residence, Chökhor Dorjeden accompanied by many disciples including Śākya Rinchen. All the disciples had a profound wish to go all the way with Jamgön, but some could not do so

282 Cf. also *SHRNT* Ca 6b6–7a1.



Fig. 93 Śākya Rinchen from a recent wall painting at Punakha Dzong. Photo: Sonam Tobgay

due to circumstances beyond their control.[283]

When Jamgön arrived at Chökhor Dorjeden, he immediately entered into retreat. He remained sunken in serenity and onepointedness, experiencing the bliss of unchangeable wisdom. In order to remove the sadness of his attendants, he pretended to have slightly recovered from his serious illness. Though he could not take any food, he showed his liking for milk.

At that time, some attendants had visions of many Ḍākinīs adorned with silk ornaments, gathering in and around the residence. Jamgön's nephew, Ngawang Thinley saw in a dream a hole of a whitish grey colour in the intermediate space above the room where Jamgön resided, and when he pondered what might be the cause, it was revealed to him by Ḍākinīs: 'it is Jamgön's path to ascend to the celestial realm.' Likewise, some disciples saw in their dream a tree at Punakha Dzong falling, whereas some others saw the sun setting, the Sand Maṇḍala for the propitiation and offering of Cakrasaṃvara being swept away by the wind, and so forth. Such portents occurred. Some disciples saw a rainbow and many patches of clouds resembling a white spread-out quilt appearing again and again directly above Jamgön's residence.

Jamgön's health continued to worsen. He sensed that his physical body would not sustain him much longer, and he thought that if he did not agree to medical treatment or the performing of *rimdro* (*rim gro*) or health rites for his recovery, his disciples perhaps would regret this. So he finally accepted medical treatment and performance of rites on a simple scale, in order not to disappoint his disciples. He also allowed his disciples to perform prayers of longevity, and other prayers as they wished.

283 Śā-kya rin-chen as a close attendant most desperately wished to accompany his teacher, but apparently was barred from this by higher authorities or due to other commitments. *JGNT–II* 225b1–3: *bdag la sogs pa'i slob bu kha shas kyang zhabs phyir 'breng 'dod che yang gzhen dbang las stabs ma bde.* See also similarly *SHRNT* Ca 6b4–5.

One day, in deep contemplation, he visualized the Maṇḍala of all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas accompanied by a host of disciples dwelling in realms of all Ten Directions, and he made offerings to them through gestures of his hands and then remained gazing upwards. It was thus that he entered into Nirvāna, seated in the meditation posture, on the auspicious day of the Fourth Day of the Sixth Month of the Water-Male-Mouse Year, corresponding to 1732, at the age of eighty-six.

Alas! The sun of Dharma and of the world today has set,
Alas! The excellent life-tree of the banner of Buddha's Teachings has fallen,
Alas! The continuity of happiness and benefit for sentient beings and the Jewel which bestows all desirable things today have disappeared,
Alas! The completely perfect Bodhi-tree that provided cool shade of tranquility and gentleness today has collapsed.

At that moment, the sky was suffused with colours, in patterns resembling lotus leaves, and directly above the residence a spiralling parasol of rainbows was observed, even from a distant place.

Gelong Ngawang Thinley was dispatched with a letter to inform the Hierarchs (the two incarnate brothers) at Wangdü Phodrang. On hearing the sad tidings, the Hierarchs and Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley immediately dispatched representatives to make offerings [at various temples and dzongs] while at Lima Lhakhang in Wangdü Phodrang a Gurusādhana Pūjā was performed.

Jamgön's last remains were brought from Seula Chökhor Dorjeden to Punakha Dzong for cremation. It was kept in the four-pillared shrine hall, well bedecked with precious religious articles and silk brocade, while a *tshokhor* (ceremonial communion service) was continuously performed.

The Hierarchs, Je Khenpo and monks arrived in succession, all of whom, one after other, paid their respects and made offerings to the *kudung* (*sku gdung* – mortal remains). The Je Khenpo offered a scarf to the *kudung* and recited the supplication prayer of the

Bhadracāryapraṇidhāna one hundred times, while at the same time supplication prayers in remembrance of the Lama (*bla ma rjes su dran pa'i gsol 'debs*) were continuously recited. The two incarnate brothers, Gyalse Trülku and Thritrul Rinpoche made various forms of offerings including incense, butter lamps, flowers and precious substances. A large number of spiritual friends and an assembly of monks headed by Chogley Namgyal and Je Khenpo, numbering close to one thousand, all made offerings and paid their respects. No people existed in any dzong, temple, monastic centre or meditation centre in any part of Bhutan, who did not make offerings.

A funeral pyre in the form of a Nirvāṇa Stūpa was built. When the *kudung* was about to be taken to the funeral site, loud lamentations resounded in the air. Even the people in general gave voice to their sorrow in this manner:

> *Alas! The Dharma King of the Three Worlds has left for the Blissful State, and the entire mundane world is without protection;*
> *Alas! Even the essence of the precious* kudung *[his mortal remains] is now being consigned to the Maṇḍala of the God of Fire,*
> *now the sun of Dharma has set in this world and plunged it into darkness;*
> *Alas! Friends, the world is now no more beautiful;*
> *Alas! In the world, the Teachings of Buddha have become a mere reflection.*

Presided over by Je Khenpo Ngawang Thinley, the funeral ceremony was performed, with over one hundred monks in attendance. When the funeral pyre was about to be set alight, the smoke emitting from the burning incense took the shape of religious symbols, and as soon as the pyre was lit, it automatically began to burn all by itself. It was quite miraculous that the fire burned completely silently and no smoke emanated from the funeral pyre. The fire blazed like shimmering rays of sunlight and moonlight, with golden-tipped flames shooting forth, while many religious symbols were seen filling the air. In particular, in the direction of the heart, a white fire which took the form of many tutelary deities such as Cakrasaṃvara, Varahi, Hayagrīva, and so forth was seen.



Fig. 94 Kudung Chörten of Jamgön now preserved in the Jampa Lhakhang at Chökhor Dorjeden, Seula. Photo: Daza

The sky became very clear; a mild sun shone and in the air snow flakes appeared as white as conch shells. A mass of clouds gathered, whilst a rainbow appeared in between the clouds like an arch of lotus leaves, and rain fell lightly through the air, vanishing before it could touch the ground. Gyalse Trülku himself hosted the performance of the Ritual of Guru Worship and supplication prayers to the deceased Root-Lama Jamgön (*rje'i gsol 'debs*) by the monks numbering about five hundred. He made a circumbulation of the funeral pyre and then made many prostrations. To all presiding over the rites, he made material offerings; and likewise to each of the monks he offered two *ngultrums*, together with many other offerings.

Extensive ritual services were conducted for one week to honour the Kudung Chörten (reliquary *chörten*, holding Jamgön's ashes). Then the Kudung Chörten was enshrined as the main sacred object of worship of Gyalse Trülku.[284] In remembrance of his Root-Lama, Gyalse Trülku arranged the recitation of one billion *Maṇi*-mantra performed by the entire monk community, following which he made extensive offerings to all the temples in Punakha Dzong, marking successful completion of the recitation. Following this, a *tshokhor* was held. He also had an image of Jamgön sculpted out of medicinal clay (*sman 'dam*) and gilded, and placed it in a beautifully carved reliquary, and then installed it in the same temple in the central tower of Punakha Dzong which held the self-created Āvalokiteśvara [i.e. Rangjung Khasarpani]. Also, a copper image of Jamgön with his own ashes as its inner relic was made and placed in his residence at Chökhor Dorjeden. Śākya Rinchen had made as his personal object of veneration a gilded copper image of his Root-Lama, measuring the height of a full extended finger span.[285]

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284 Cf .*SHRNT* Ca 9a4f. After Byams-mgon's remains had been installed as *nang rten*, rGyal sras sprul sku had a statue of Byams-mgon and some other images made and then installed in a shrine room called lTung-gshags lha-khang within the sPu-ṇa-kha rDzong.

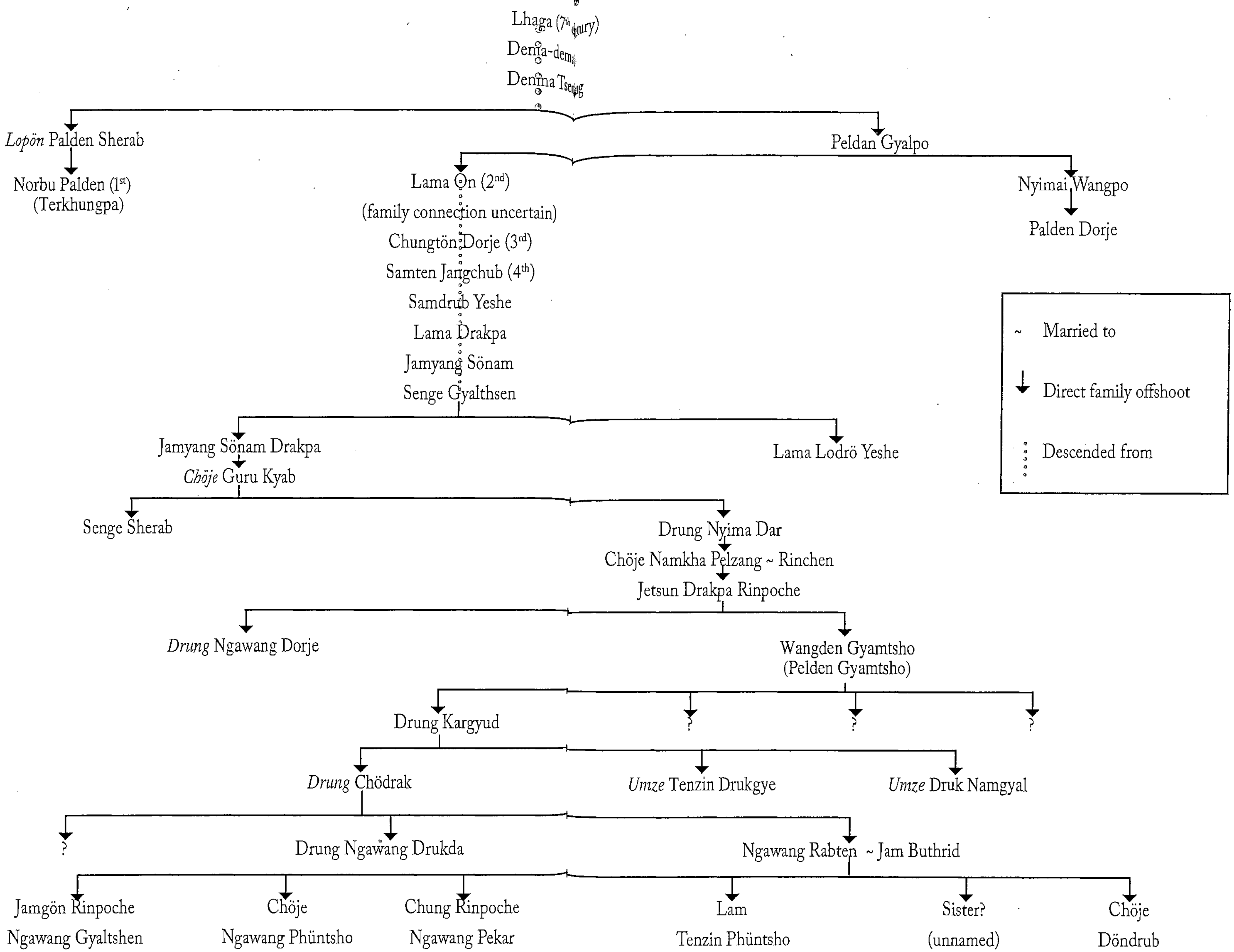
285 Cf. *SHRNT* Ca 9b3f. None of the objects could be identified at Se'u-la or at sPu-ṇa-kha rDzong, except for a *sku dgung mchod rten* said to be that of Byams-mgon Nga-dbang rgyal-mtshan, now preserved in the Byams-pa lha-khang, at Se'u-la. See Fig. 94.

Besides that, many other devoted followers, in their own capacities, were said to have erected a countless number of images of Jamgön in different parts of the country. His nephew, Ngawang Thinley also erected in memory of his late uncle a Jangchub Chörten made out of sandalwood and adorned with precious metals, containing many precious relics inside. The rites of passage for this great sublime being, *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen were thus completed in a most elaborate manner.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Family Lineage of Jamgön



Appendix II

The Successive Reincarnations of *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen (1647–1732)

The incarnation lineage of *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen is regarded as one of the most distinguished and respected lineages in Bhutan. His incarnations together with the rebirths of his nephew *chöje* Ngawang Thinley filled over different periods a number of high positions in the service of the government, such as that of the Desi as well as Je Khenpo. All the successive Amorimu *chöje* incarnations (with the exception of the 5th) [286] were to rise from their monastic seat at Seula to be elected to the high religious office of Je Khenpo.

I. The 1st Jamgön Trülku Yeshe Dorje (1757–1805)[287]

The first Jamgön incarnation was Yeshe Dorje, born at Balangnang of Gön Shari in Punakha district in 1757. Some dispute surrounded his candidacy as a reincarnation of Jamgön, since other families, too, claimed they had a son who was the true incarnation. In order to settle the matter, *chöje* Ngawang Thinley took his favourite candidate in his arms and, praying to the protective deity Damchen Gomo, threw him out of the inner room into the courtyard [of the temple], whereupon the

286 The list is based upon Kar-ma tshe-ring 2002, and Ardussi 2000.

287 According to Ardussi, an interesting tale is reported concerning the rebirth of Byams-mgon Ngag-dbang rgyal-mtshan, indicating that Ye-shes rdo-rje was first recognized as a prince of La-dvags. Hearing of this, Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las is said to have slapped the face of the protective deity sGo-mo for having permitted this intrusion on what the A-mo-ri-mu family treated as its prerogative. sGo-mo transformed himself into a bee and flew to La-dvags, where he stung the prince and removed his consciousness principle (*rnam shes*). The prince died, and the bee flew back to Bhutan and injected the *rnam shes* into the womb of a local woman, who gave birth to Ye-shes rdo-rje. A *gter* image of sGo-mo with crooked nose is still kept at Se'u-la. Photos could not be taken as the image is considered very sacred, and hence sealed away from the public. It is displayed for public blessing once in a year.

protective deity, in disguise as a nomad, instantly caught the boy on his lap; everyone was astounded at this magical display and believed the boy to be the true incarnation.

The first incarnation relied upon *chöje* Ngawang Thinley and Je Khenpo Künga Gyamtsho (rg. 1769–1771), the 12th Je Khenpo as his tutors, with whom he studied all the Buddhist philosophical teachings including initiation and empowerment. He is said to have achieved complete meditative accomplishment. At the age of thirty-five, he was enthroned as the 17th Je Khenpo in the Iron-Pig Year and served for six years (rg. 1791–1797). After retirement, he continued to teach until the time of his death in 1805.

II. The 2nd Jamgön Trülku Jamyang Tenzin *alias* Düjom Gyaltshen (1831–1855)

The second incarnation was born into the family lineage of Gön Amorimu in 1831. He received a preliminary initiation from Sherab Gyaltshen (rg. 1836–1839), the 25th Je Khenpo and from *yongzin* Pema Zangpo. He perfected both the theoretical and meditative aspect of Buddhist practice. At the age of twenty-four (in 1854), he was installed as the 41st Desi. While he was serving, political strife broke out in the central government, as a result of which he could not reign long, and died at the age of twenty-five, while still on the throne.

III. The 3rd Jamgön Trülku Gyaltshen (1902–26)

The 3rd incarnation was also born into the Obtsho family lineage of Amorimu, in 1902. He took many learned personalities including *chöje* Thinley Gyaltshen as his Lama and received many teachings and precepts including the preliminary monastic vows, in particular instructions pertaining to the Drukpa Kagyudpa tradition. He became a learned and accomplished master, but passed away at the young age of twenty-five.

IV. The 4th Jamgön Trülku Gyamtsho (1928 –1991/92)

The 4th incarnation was born at Draktsa in Trongsa district in 1928. Attending on *chöje* Ngawang Thinley and others, he studied Buddhist teachings, but could not prove himself as beneficial to the religion as other Jamgön Trülku. He died at the age of sixty-three in the Iron-Horse Year.

Appendix III

The Lineage Succession of the Amorimu *Chöje*

I. *Chöje* Ngawang Thinley (1712–1770)

He was a nephew of *jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen. He was born into the family of Amorimu in 1712. He received all ordinary and extraordinary instructions pertaining to the Drukpa Kagyudpa tradition including precepts from Jamgön and *chöje* Chung [i.e. Ngawang Pekar] and attained the highest accomplishment of Mahāmudra luminosity through strenuous practice.

For a while he acted as the head lama of Svayambhūcaitya in Nepal, and after returning he resided at Seula Monastery as the representative of Jamgön. He enlarged the monastery at Seula as a memorial service for the founder and erected many sacred objects and reliquaries of the *Ku Sung Thugten* (*sku gsung thugs rten*) including a two storey image of Buddha Maitreyanātha (Byams-pa mgon-po). It was around that time that the temple with two storey image of Maitreyanātha at Ngödrubchu was also founded.

Since he had obtained control over the powerful protective deities, he could bind them into any kind of service. Once, rebuking the mask of Kasung Godüchenpo, he slapped its face, whereupon blood trickled from its nose, and this mask is still to be seen at Seula. He later came to hold the post of Dorje Lopön (Vajrācarya) in the central monastic body, and subsequently was enthroned as the 11th Je Khenpo (*rg*. 1762–1769). While he was Je Khenpo, he initiated an expansion of the monk community in Bhutan. He resigned from this position in 1769 and returned to Seula where he died at the age of forty-nine in the following year.

II. Chöje Śākya Gyaltshen (1790–1836)

He was born into the family lineage of Amorimu Chöje in 1790. In addition to the monastic vows, he received the complete teachings of the Drukpa Kagyudpa tradition from Jamgön Yeshe Gyaltshen, the 18th Je Khenpo (rg. 1797-1803). At the age of forty-five, he was enthroned as the 24th Je Khenpo (rg. 1831-1836). He passed away at the age of forty-seven while still on the throne.

III. *Chöje* Thinley Gyaltshen (1839–1898)

He was born into the family of Amorimu Chöje in 1839. He received preliminary and advanced teachings and instructions from Yonten Gyaltshen (rg. 1851–1858), the 31st Je Khenpo and Tshulthrim Gyaltshen (rg. 1858–1860), the 32nd Je Khenpo. He became a highly realized master. He came to the throne of Je Khenpo twice – the first time as the 42nd Je Khenpo (rg. 1886–1888) and the second time as the 44th incumbent (rg. 1889–1891) and worked extensively for the well being of teachings and beings.

Being a most accomplished master, he produced a large number of disciples and greatly furthered the spread of teachings in Bhutan. After retiring, he went to reside at Seula whereafter he carried out expansion work of the monastery. He passed away at the age of sixty.

IV. *Chöje* Ngawang Thinley (the Later One; *chima*) (1916–1950)

He was born into the Obtsho family lineage of Amorimu in 1916. He studied under the supervision and direction of peerless spiritual luminaries of the time, such as *lopön* Penjor, Tshenlob Ngödrub, *ridag* Sizhi Namgyal, the 58th Je Khenpo (rg. 1927–1931) and *khenchen* Chökyi Wangchuk, the 59th Je Khenpo (rg. 1931–1940). He received complete precepts and instruction pertaining to the Drukpa Kagyudpa tradition.

At the age of twenty-five, he became the 60th Je Khenpo (rg. 1940–1946). At the age of thirty-one, he resigned and went into meditation.

V. *Chöje* Yeshe Ngödrub (1951–1983)

He was born into the family lineage of Amorimu in 1951. He received teachings including the monastic vow from learned teachers and lamas, including *lopön* Khandro, the 67th Je Khenpo, Thinley Lhündrub, the 68th Je Khenpo *jetsün* Tenzin Döndrub, the 69th Je Khenpo *khewang* Gedün Rinchen, and *drubwang* Sönam Zangpo amongst others. He passed away at the young age of thirty-two.

VI. *Chöje* Mipham Chökyi Nyinjed (b. 1983)

The 6th and present reigning *chöje* incarnation Mipham Chökyi Nyinjed was born into the family of Amorimu (1983). Immediately following his birth, the late Tshenlob Sangye Thinley repeatedly predicted that the newly born child would prove to be the reincarnation of his predecessor. At the age of three, the late H.H. Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche gave clear recognition that the boy was indeed the true incarnation of *chöje* Yeshe Ngödrub.

At the age of five, after the hair-cutting ceremony under Je Khenpo Tenzin Döndrub, he entered into the monkhood. For four years, between the ages of eight and twelve, he studied beginning with alphabet, and learned the Hevajra-tantra and other teachings under the tutorship of the Ex-Precentor (*umze*) by the name Jagöd of the Zhung Dratshang.

In 1995, the young Chöje Rinpoche was enthroned as the 6th incarnation of Amorimu *chöje* at Punakha Dzong, in a ceremony presided over by the late Je Khenpo Geshe Gedün Rinchen from whom he later received teachings of the Drukpa tradition.

From 1995 to 1996, he remained in the central monk body, strictly adhering to the regular monastic discipline and curricula, and during that time also underwent training on ritual practice including the separate



Fig. 95 The present *chöje* incarnation Mipham Chökyi Nyinjed (b. 1983)

ritual ceremonies of the Thimphu and Punakha Dromchö [=*sGrub mchod*]. In 1995 while residing at Trashichödzong, he received the Pratimokṣa vows twice and oral transmission of *künkhyen* Pemakarpo's Collected Works as well as of the Kagyud Serthreng (*bKa'-brgyud gser-'phreng*) from the present [i.e. 70th] Je Khenpo, *trülku* Jigme Chödra, who at that time was serving as Dorje Lopon (*rDo-rje slob-dpon*) of the Central Monk Body.

As he began to grow up, he received complete teachings concerning Dam-ngag Dongpo Sumdril (*gdam ngag sdom po gsum 'dril*) of the Drukpa Kagyudpa tradition from the 68th Je Khenpo, Tenzin Döndrub as well as from the present Je Khenpo, *Trülku* Jigme Chödra. In 2000, he received the complete transmission of Känjur from the present Je Khenpo at Dechen Phodrang over a four month period. After completion of his theoretical studies, he entered into three year retreat and completed it successfully, gaining profound meditational experience, and followed this by one year mountain retreat under the close guidance of the 68th Je Khenpo.

In 2002, he upgraded the *Shedra* (Buddhist College) at his monastic centre at Seula Chökhor Dorjeden out of his private funds, increasing the number of monk-students to forty and, in the same year, he began to give teachings to students. Presently he resides at his centre and continues to work for the welfare of teachings and beings.

Appendix IV

Successive Bhutanese/Drukpa Lama-Representatives to Takna (Ladakh)

King Senge Namgyal, who ruled Ladakh from 1616–1623 and again from 1624–1642, was a devout follower of the Drukpa Kagyud School. When he heard of Zhabdrung's popularity as a great master, he expressed the wish that Zhabdrung become his court priest; so a messenger was sent to Bhutan inviting Zhabdrung to Ladakh. But since Zhabdrung at that time was in the midst of confronting an invasion from Tibet, and also in the process of consolidating the Drukpa power in Bhutan, he could not make the journey himself, and is said to have sent *chöje* Mukzinpa ([sMug/sMon/Mud] 'dzin-pa) as his monk-representative to the court of the Ladakhi king along with a letter of "Sixteen I-s or Sixteen Tenets" (*Nga ro bcu drug*).[288] Since that time, he is said to have entertained such close ties with Zhabdrung that there was a regular exchange of gifts and letters between them.

A number of people from Ladakh visited Bhutan to receive blessings and teachings from the Zhabdrung. King Senge Namgyal is recorded to have donated a cluster of monastic estates around Ngari Korsum (mNga'-ris skor-gsum) to Zhabdrung which included Nyenpori (gNyen-po-ri), Driraphu ('Bri-ra-phug), Dzuthrulphu (rDzu-'phrul-phug) and Gedzong (Gad rDzong), in and around the areas of Kailash, together with eight villages.[289] He is also said to have donated Lowo Chödzong (Glo-bo

288 "*Nga bcu drug ma*" or the Sixteen I-s was composed by Zhabs-drung himself, marking his victory over the gTsang sDe-srid in 1618. These were later carved on a wooden block and promulgated as a personal seal. It signified his confidence in the religious mission of the 'Brugp-pa; and his position as the theocratic head of Bhutan.

A letter with the *Nga bcu-drug-ma* citation was sent to King Seng-ge rnam-rgyal through *chos-rje* rMug-'dzin-pa. It is said to be still preserved at sTag-sna Monastery. We have not been able to inspect it and were told that it is not in good shape. Cf. *STM* 2004: 8.

289 Cf. *Druk Karpo* 1986: 101–02.

Chos-rdzong) along with its estate, and sent to the court of Zhabdrung in Bhutan his brother Gyalpo Tenzin, who later held the powerful post of Wangdü Dzongpön.

The relationship between *chöje* Mukzinpa and King Senge Namgyal became so close over time that the former was offered many monastic estates and settlements including the monastic site of Takna along with a sealed document.[290] Takna became the main seat of the Southern Drukpa Kagyud where successive Bhutanese monk-representatives mainly resided during their stay in Ladakh. Concerning their future relationship (i.e. Bhutan and Ladakh), with Lhawang Nyenpo (lHa-dbang gnyen-po) as their witness, the two made a strong vow of commitment:

> Taking the local protective deity Lhawang Nyenpo as their witness, it was proclaimed that the fate of their relationship would remain as one until Mt. Kailash would melt and Lake Mansarowar would dry up.[291]

In the 1670's, during the reign of the 3rd Desi Mingyur Tenpa, the ties with Ladakh – then under the rule of Delek Namgyal (*ca.* rg. 1680–1691), the son of the King Dedän Namgyal (co-rg. *ca.* 1642–1694) – were further strengthened and the Drukpa government of Bhutan was said to have been granted more monastic estates. Following *chöje* Mukzinpa, successive Bhutanese monk-representatives were appointed to administer the areas donated to the Drukpa government and to take the position of Head Lama of Takna Monastery. The list of successive Drukpa Lama-representatives according to Ladakhi version is as follows:[292]

1. *Chöje* Mukzinpa (*ca.* 1590–1620)[293]

290 See *STM* 2004: 8–10; *MLNK* 1984: 202.

291 *gangs ti si ma zhu / mtsho mo ma pham ma bskam gyi bar mchod yon skyid sdug gcig pa byed pa nas / lha dbang gnyen po dpang du btsugs nas rtsi kha byas.* See *STM* 2004: 10.

292 The list is based on a record available at sTag-sna Monastery. See also *STM* 2004: 31–32. The list of active Drukpa representatives at Takna Monastery considered by the Ladakhis to be purely Bhutanese, mistaking Drukpa here for Bhutanese.

293 Dates of tenure are based on *STM*. Except for the date of Byams-mgon's tenure, the remaining dates need to be finally ascertained.

2. *Jamgön* Ngawang Gyaltshen (1706–1712)
3. *Chöje* Jamyang Pėkar (*ca.* 1720–1760)
4. Gyalpo Zhabdrung (*ca.* 1720–1770)[294]
5. Druk Lama Döndrub Śākya (*ca.* 1770–?)
6. Druk Lama Ngawang Sherab (*ca.* 1780–?)
7. *Chöje* Tshulthrim Dorje
8. *Lama* Sangye Trashi (of Zangskar served as acting Lama)
9. Druk Lama Ngawang Peldan and Sangye Trashi
10. Druk Lama Tenzin Trashi
11. Druk Lama *gelong* Jordan
12. Druk Lama *gelong* Marigpa
13. Druk Lama Tshering Lodrö
14. Druk Lama *gelong* Dzuki together with Drukpa Trashi, Drukpa Sangye, Drukpa Senge and Drukpa Tshewang
15. Druk Kutshab Dargye Phüntshog
16. *Lopön* Palzangpo
17. Druk Kutshab Ngawang Tenzin
18. *Chöje* Jamtrul Rinpoche
19. *Lama* Trashi Tenphel
20. Ngawang Trashi Dechen Dorje
21. Ngawang Donyö Jigdrel Dorje (present Takna Rinpoche).

294 He was the prince of king dBang-phyug rnam-rgyal of Zangs-dkar. He was also known by the name of bsTan-srung stobs-ldan Mi-'gyur tshe-brtan rnam-rgyal. Cf. *STM* 2004: 31.

Appendix V

Successive *Jamgön* Trülku – a Ladakhi Version

The following list is mainly based upon *STM* compiled by the present Takna Rinpoche:

I. The 1st Jamgön Trülku Karma Tenzin

Karma Tenzin was believed to be the first rebirth of Jamgön. He was born to a family from the Luga (Klu-'ga') clan in Kham Derge.[295] The formal recognition could not be conferred as he was born in a distant land. However, it is maintained that a karmic connection from his former life brought him to Central Tibet and then to Garzha and Zangskar, which enabled him to meet many celebrated spiritual masters of his time.

He relied upon the Zangskar Zhadpa Rinpoche from whom he received profound precepts and instructions on the Drukpa Kagyudpa tradition. He also received teachings from Nenang Pawo Rinpoche (gNas-gnang dPa'-bo Rin-po-che) and others. After receiving the theoretical aspects of teachings, he meditated in seclusion in different places such as Jalandhar, Central Tibet, Ngari, Lhodrak Kharchu (lHo-brag mKhar-chu) and so on, and perfected the mastery of Mahāmudrā. He travelled widely in the Himalayan regions to deliver teachings. He produced many

295 During a private interview with the presiding sTag-sna Rin-po-che (also repeated in his *STM*), he argued for the circumstances behind the discovery of the incarnation outside Bhutanese territory: The 5th Desi dGe-'dun chos-'phel had treated Byams-mgon Ngag-dbang rgyal-mtshan's family cruelly. His father was brutally tortured and then assassinated, his mother and siblings were exiled twice, and their family home was destroyed. These factors were said to have undermined the auspiciousness of Byams-mgon being reborn in Bhutan. Another argument mooted was that Byams-mgon served as court chaplain to the sDe-dge royal family including Sangs-rgyas bstan-pa. The wishful prayers made and the pure pledge or *samaya* between the royal family and Byams-mgon are said to have contributed to Byams-mgon taking rebirth in Khams.

learned disciples all of whom proved to be talented dharma propagators. He passed away at Dzongkhul Gönpa (rDzong-khul dGon-pa).

II. The 2nd Jamgön Trülku Trashi Tenphel (1811–1875)

The 2nd Jamgön Trülku was born to Norbu Chöphel and Chö Buthrid in 1811, at the village of Mar Kharu (dMar Kha-ru) in Minyag (Mi-snyag) valley in Ladakh. He was enrolled as a novice at Hemis Monastery at an early age, and when he was thirteen he was formally enthroned as the incarnation of Karma Tenzin. He then began receiving religious instructions from different religious masters, such as Khamtrul Tenpai Nyima (Khams-sprul bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma), Kathog Rigzin Tshewang (Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang), Drukpa Thinley Shingta ('Brug-pa 'Phrin-las Shing-rta) and Situ Rinpoche (Si-tu Rin-po-che) among others.

Later on, he is recorded to have travelled to Bhutan to further his Buddhist training and education. During his four years' stay at Punakha and Thimphu, he took full monastic vows (*bsnyen rdzogs*) from Je Khenpo. From *yongzin* Mipham Lodrö (Mi-pham Blo-gros), he received key Drukpa Kagyudpa teachings. After the completion of his extensive studies and training, the government of Bhutan appointed him as Bhutanese monastic representative to look after all monastic seats and estates in Ladakh which had been gifted to Bhutan during *chöje* Mukzinpa's time.

He returned to Ladakh as a Bhutanese representative. As Zangskar and Garzha had many Drukpa branch seats, he stayed there most of the time. Gaining spiritual maturity, he attracted many devout disciples in the later course of his life, and they helped to oversee and spread the Drukpa Kagyudpa teachings in that part of the world. Later, he shifted to Ladakh where he started to build Gönpa Soma, his monastic residence at Leh. He also executed the renovation of some of the Gönpa's in Ladakh. He passed away in 1875, before the construction of Gönpa Soma had been completed.

III. The 3rd Jamgön Trülku Ngawang Trashi Dechen Dorje (1889–1919)

The 3rd Jamgön was born at Pethub near Leh in Ladakh in 1889. He was recognized as the incarnation of the 2nd Jamgön Trülku by the former Kushu Bakula. He received hair-cutting ceremony under Taktshang Repa Rinpoche and was enrolled as a novice monk at Hemis Gönpa. In 1894, at the age of ten, he was enthroned at Takna Gönpa where he began his reign as the head of the Southern Drukpa in Ladakh.

Having always wanted to receive the authentic Drukpa precepts and instructions from a suitable master, in 1916 he travelled to Bhutan and began receiving teachings from the 6th Zhabdrung Thugtrul Jigme Dorje (1905–1931) at Talo (Puṇakha). While he was at Talo with the Thugtrul, he suddenly passed away in 1919 when he was thirty-five, three years after arriving in Bhutan. His sudden passing away was mourned by his followers in Ladakh.

IV. The 4th Jamgön Trülku Ngawang Dönyö Dorje (1920 – present)

The present Takna Rinpoche, otherwise considered 4th Jamgön Trülku [hereafter to be known by Takna Rinpoche] was born to father Padma Dradul Pema and Yidzin Wangmo at Gangpa in Ladakh in 1920. At the age of three in 1922, Takna Rinpoche received his hair-cutting ceremony from Taktshang Repa Rinpoche and received the name of Ngawang Dönyö Dorje. In 1924, he was recognized as the reincarnation of the 3rd Jamgön by Taktshang Repa and then invited to Takna Gönpa. When he was seven years old, he joined Hemis Gönpa and began pursuing religious studies under the proper guidance and care of Taktshang Repa. When he was seventeen, he was ceremoniously enthroned at Takna Gönpa as the Head of the Southern Drukpa Kagyud in Ladakh.

In 1938, when he was eighteen, he went to Bhutan. He met Ex-Je Khenpo (57th Je Khenpo Ngawang Gyaltshen; rg. 1922–1927], who was at the time residing at Künga Chöling (Kun-dga' chos-gling) in Paro

and received numerous instructions; he also received the *getshul* (*dge tshul*) vow from him. He subsequently returned to Ladakh.

Attending upon Taktshang Repa at Götshang Cave, he did preliminary practices of different traditions such as the Mahāmudra, Longchen Nyingthig (*Phyag chen* and *Klong chen snying thig*) traditions, and the Könchog Chidü (*dKon mchog spyi 'dus*), and so forth, and over time received the appropriate empowerments, followed by reading-transmission and instructions (*dbang lung khrid gsum*) on different deities.

Shortly after returning to Takna Gönpa, he received the message that his Root-Lama had passed away at the Götshang Cave. In 1944, at the age of twenty-five, Takna Rinpoche was invited to Zangskar by his followers. It was his first visit. He found that three Drukpa monasteries – Sani Kanika, Barden and the Dzongkhul monasteries - were in a dilapidated state. He initiated renovations at all three, and the work was brought to completion within a period of four years.

In 1949, at the age of thirty, Takna Rinpoche undertook pilgrimage to Garzha as well as to see Drukpa Gönpas in that area. He found that the Gandhola temple founded by his predecessor had become dilapidated. Renovation of the Gönpa took two years.

In 1952, he undertook pilgrimage to Lhasa via Nepal, and Phagri. He visited the Jowo Rinpoche (Jo-bo Rin-po-che) and other sacred sites in Lhasa. He remained in Lhasa for six months, and while there he had the opportunity to meet the 14th Dalai Lama and Thrijang Rinpoche, from whom he received empowerments and teachings. He also paid a visit to Tshurphu where he met the 16th Karmapa.

On his journey back to his homeland, he paid a visit to Trashi Lhünpo (bKra-shis lhun-po), staying there for one month. He met the Panchen Lama. He then went to Sakya and paid a visit to Sakya Thṛidzin Drolma Phodrang (Sa-skya Khri-'dzin sGrol-ma Pho-brang), from whom he received teachings and empowerments. In Mustang, attending upon Lama Ngawang Padma Chöphel (Ngag-dbang Padma Chos-'phel),



Fig. 95 The present Takna Trülku (the 4th Jamgön Trülku) Ngawang Dönyö Dorje (1920 – present). Photo: John Johnston

he received complete sacred precepts and instructions of the so-called Dam-ngag Dongpo Sumdril.[296] He also received empowerment and instructions from Drakar Kagyud Rinpoche (Brag-dkar bKa'-brgyud Rin-po-che), Abo Rinpoche and other masters. After successful completion of retreat meditation in Tsibri, in 1956 he returned to Ladakh, having been away for a total of five years.

Again in 1960, he travelled to Kalimpong and received reading-transmission and instructions of the Rinchen Terdzod (*Rin chen gter mdzod*) and other Nyingma teachings from Düjom Rinpoche (bDud 'joms Rin-po-che). Also while at Tsho Padma (Rewalsar), he received Nyingma teachings including Rinchen Terdzod from Düjom Rinpoche.

In 1963, when he was forty-four, he undertook complete renovation of Takna. He procured many important Buddhist texts for the library at Takna Gönpa. He served as the president of the Ladakh Buddhist Council for nine years from 1977 to 1985. After resigning from the post, he co-ordinated the building of Mud Gönpa (rMud dGon-pa) with its religious objects, on the request of the people of Jangthang (Byang-thang), and presided over the consecratory rituals after its completion. He also conferred empowerment, transmission and initiation (*dbang lung khrid gsum*) of the Drukpa tradition to the people there.

In 1987, he conferred the complete empowerment, transmission and initiation of the Drukpa tradition on the 9th Zhabdrung Thugtrul at Zangskar. Since then he has continued to bestow empowerment and teachings upon his followers in Ladakh and Zangskar on a number of occasions. Today, he is in advanced age and is one of the most respected and exalted Rinpoches who hold unbroken transmission lineage of Southern Drukpa School.

296 See Dargye and Sørensen 2001: 88.

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GLOSSARY

The following is a selective glossary of Dzongkha (Dz.) /Chöked (Chök.) / Sanskrit (Skt.) words found in the text of the book. The meaning of the word is given in parenthesis at first usage in the text. The word appears in italics at first mention in the text and thereafter is not in italics.

Ācārya: Spiritual teacher or learned scholar of traditional religious beliefs (see also **Lopön**)

Bardo: Intermediate state between death and rebirth; more accurately described as the "in between" state between death and conception into the next rebirth

Chagdzö: Treasurer

Cham: Sacred ritual dance (Dz. *'cham*)

Chang: Beer brewed from barley

Chila: Provincial Monk Governor (Dz. *spyi bla*). Chilas were usually monks (specially during the time of Zhabdrung) whereas Pönlops (*dpon slob*) were appointed from the laity. Both were respected posts and of equal power. The pönlops of Trongsa, Daga and Paro were the most powerful, equal to the rank of cabinet ministers. They were known as *Chog kyi chi la nam sum* (*phyogs kyi spyi bla rnam gsum*) or the Three Provincial Chilas. There were also pönlops in smaller regions, for example Uma Pönlop, Chabcha Pönlop, Toebi Pönlop, but these were not as powerful as those of Trongsa, Daga and Paro. (see also **Pönlop**)

Chöje: Head of a religious lineage, often married (also *Zhengo*, *Dung*). *Chöje*, *zhengo* and dung carry the same meaning, in that they are titles given to a family descended from religious nobility, who usually proliferate family lines. Family lines descended from Phajo Drukgom Zhipo are usually addressed as *zhengo*; family lines from other Drukpa masters like Drukpa Kuenley and Pemalingpa are addressed as *chöje*; and the family lines from Lhase Tsangma are addressed as *dung*.

Chörten: Monument with relics inside, which to Buddhists represents the mind of the Buddha (Skt. *stūpa*)

Ḍākiṇī: Emanation of the enlightened mind; female tantric deity who protects and serves the Buddhist doctrine and those who practise Buddhism. In Vajrayana Buddhism, the Sanskrit term ḍākiṇī is rendered khandroma (Chök. *mkha' 'gro ma*) meaning "she who moves in space" and the ḍākiṇī is sometimes described as a sky walker or sky dancer. Ḍākiṇīs are energetic thought forms, evoking the movement of energy in space. They act as muses for spiritual practice and sometimes come to test an aspirant's control. Ḍākiṇīs can be seen as symbols of the naked or natural mind, freed of illusion and stripped back to a pure and unsullied state. The ḍākiṇī is the last stage on the Vajrayana Path (see below)

Desi / Druk Desi: Title given to the temporal rulers of Bhutan from 1651 to 1905; known as the Dev (or Deb) Raja in British accounts

Dhāraṇī: Mystic formula/sacred incantation, the recitation or copying of which is meritorious; a string of words understood to bear in condensed form a particular meaning or intention, often a teaching of the Buddha. A sacred Sanskrit phrase used as a verbal protective device or amulet and as a support or instrument for concentration, the dhāraṇī encapsulates the essential doctrine contained in a much longer sacred text and serves as an aid to its retention. A memorised dhāraṇī contains the power of the word of the Buddha, which is able to protect one from harm and overcome enemies.

Dharma: Body of teachings expounded by the Buddha; one's righteous duty; moral law

Drubchen: Great Spiritual Master, highly accomplished spiritual master, or perfected master: in the Tantric, or esoteric, traditions of India and Tibet, a person who, by the practice of meditative disciplines, has attained maha (great) *siddha* (psychic and spiritual powers); (Skt. *Mahasiddha*, Chök. *Grub thob chen po*, commonly contracted to either grub chen, Dz. *drubchen* or *grub thob*, Dz. *drubthob*)

Drubchen ceremony: Great accomplishment practice; grand religious ceremony performed annually, to purify the negativities of all sentient beings, particularly of the deceased (Dz. *sgrub chen*). This grand ceremony is a method of meditation in Vajrayāna Buddhism that involves mindful mantra recitation in a group, sacred music and dance and extensive offerings. The ceremony goes on without interruption for around seven days and is considered a very swift means for gathering merit for purifying emotional and conceptual afflictions to reveal mind's essential nature and its pure qualities of compassion and wisdom.

Drubwang: Powerful lord of accomplishment

Drukyul: Name given to new nation state of Bhutan after the arrival of the Zhabdrung (means Land of the Thunder Dragon)

Drung: Secretary, Chamberlain, or close attendant (to a person of high rank)

Drungyig: Secretary, in context meaning someone who is well-versed in grammar, composition, drafting and also calligraphy. In 17th century Bhutan, edicts and orders issued within Bhutan were written in *jogyig*, the Bhutanese cursive script. People who were good at writing *jogyig* were highly respected. Nowadays, however, *drungyig* translates simply as clerk

Dung: Title given to a family descended from religious nobility; for a fuller explanation, see above, under **Chöje**

Dzong: Fortified complex serving as the religious, military and administrative centre for the district

Dzongdag: District administrator

Dzongpön: Old term for dzongdag, or district administrator

Dzongzin: Dzong overseer

Gelong: Ordained celibate monk

Genyen: Generic name for a group of local deities (sometimes said to be 21 in number) in the greater Himalayan region, most of whom are identified with snow peaks (Chök. *dge bsnyen*)

Geshe: Academic degree in Buddhist philosophy (roughly equivalent to the secular Ph.D.) held by scholar-monks; a scholar-monk holding the degree

Gönkhang: Temple dedicated to protective and terrifying deities, which women usually may not enter

Gönpa: Monastery

Götor: Silk or brocade-made effigy with thread-cross, made in order to embody the essence of a protective deity (see footnote 78: need to look at figs. 16, 21 & 23

Guhyācārya (Skt.)**:** Sacred Master

Gyalpo spirit: Type of mischievous spirit which, when subdued by a great master, can also act as a guardian of the teachings of the Buddha (Chök. *rgyal po*)

Gyalse: Spiritual son (i.e. of the Buddha); also refers to son of a king (Chök. *rgyal-sras*)

Gyalse Changchubsempa: Spiritual son of the Buddha, i.e. a Bodhisattva (Chök. *changchup-sempa*), one who has attained enlightenment and has dedicated his/her life to helping others achieve this also

Gyaltshab: Representative of the Zhabdrung in Bhutan

Jamgön: Literally, the bodhisattva destined to be the future Buddha (the Buddha-to-come); also Compassionate One; an honorific epithet bestowed on spiritual teachers, especially to successive incarnations of Ngawang Gyaltshen in Bhutan (Skt. *Maitreya,* Chök. *Jampa*)

Jetsun: Honorific title given to spiritual teachers, meaning Venerable or Exalted One

Kapala: Highly decorated cup or bowl made from a human skull, representing the symbolic destruction of evil entities. The cup is used to hold offerings of bread or wine, symbolizing blood and flesh, to "wrathful" deities. The *kapala* may be a carryover from ancient practices of human sacrifice

Karmācārya (Skt.): Tantric priest/officiant (literally Action Master)

Khedrub: Heart-son, disciple; *khedrup chenpo* = great heart-son; one who is both a scholar and a learned and accomplished practitioner

Khenchen: Head professor; title bestowed sparingly on outstanding *khenpos* (monk graduates of higher religious studies)

Kudung: Mortal remains or embalmed body: *chörten* structure or reliquary *stūpa* which holds a person's earthly remains

Kudrung: Disciplinarian in the monastic body

Lado: Soul stone, a stone believed to have belonged to a local deity or any master

Lama: Vajrayana Buddhist master (can be celibate or married)

Lantsā: Chöked name for the Ranjana script (also known as Kutila) which was developed in the 11^{th} century and is derived from the Brahmi script. It was used until the mid-20^{th} century by the Newari people to write texts and Sanskrit. Tibetans and Bhutanese use this script, which they call *Lantsā*, for writing the Sanskrit titles of books which have been translated from Sanskrit to Chöked, and for decoration in temples and Mandalas. (see also **Wartu, Uchen**)

Lhakhang: Temple, sanctuary

Lhomon: Rregion encompassing modern day Bhutan was known by this name prior to the 17th century formation of the nation state

Lopön, Lopönma: Master, female master / teacher or *ācārya* (religious master of India); title given to anyone who has received a traditional education, but most particularly to certain learned monks

Lotsawa: Chöked/Tibetan word used as a title to refer to the native Tibetan translators who worked with Indian scholars to translate the texts of the Buddhist canon into Chöked from Sanskrit and other Asian languages (Skt. *locchava*, meaning 'bilingual' or 'eyes of the world')

Maṇḍala: Mystic cosmic diagram; abode or world of a deity, symbolically depicted as a cosmic diagram; in Vajrayana Buddhism, the Maṇḍala is the abode of the *yidam* (meditational deity, or spiritual guide); it is an environment composed of utterly pure appearances that communicate the essence of the wisdom of enlightenment

Maṇi-mantra, maṇi-prayer: Om Maṇi Padme Hum – Prayer to invite the mercy of the deity *Chenrezig* (Skt. *Avalokiteśvara*), Bodhisattva of Compassion

Mantra: Powerful word or phrase that may or may not have meaning in the same way as a sentence; sacred sounds that represent the essence of individual deities and are said to purify one's speech; literal meaning is Mind Protection (Chök. *sngags*). A mantra is a religious or mystical syllable or poem, primarily used as a spiritual conduit to instil focused concentration in the devotee, and is intended to free the mind from illusion and pursuit of material things. Mantra may also be chanted in religious ceremonies with a broader purpose (e.g. to avoid danger, eliminate enemies). Mantra originated in the Vedic religion of India, later spreading to Hinduism and from there to Buddhism

Mantradhara: Accomplished Vajrayana (i.e. tantric) practitioner

Mo: Form of of divination, often involving the deity Palden Lhamo, widely used within all four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism; *Mo* is generally performed by casting of dice or by seizing the beads of a rosary at random

Nāga: Spirit-like creatures closely associated with snakes, which are attracted to water and cleanliness

Namthar: Biography of a saint or great religious figure in the northern Buddhist tradition

Nangten: Sacred religious object enshrined in temple / *lhakhang*; inner treasure

Nangzung - sacred relics/objects inserted into statues, *chörtens*, etc

Nirvāṇa(Skt)**:** Liberation; freedom from attachment; ultimate state of spiritual enlightenment

Nyandar - offering in the form of scarf and cash

Pheldung: Literally "increasing bone": also known as multiplying Buddha relics. These are bone "pearls" ranging in size from a mustard seed to a pea that emerge from saintly remains and images that appear in bodily or other substances connected with cremation (Chök. *'phel gdung*)

Phurpa: Three-sided ritual dagger, tool for destroying negative vibrations (Chök. *phur bu*). The *phurba* is used as a ritual implement to signify stability on prayer grounds during ceremonies, and only those initiated in its use, or otherwise empowered, may wield it.

Pönlop: Regional governor (see also **Chila**)

Protecting-thread: Thread blessed by a *lama* and tied around the neck

Pūjā (Skt): Ritual practices of worship, offering or reverence, including bowing, making offerings and chanting

Rimdro: Ritual/rite performed to heal or to avert obstructions/ misfortune

Sādhana: 'Means of accomplishment or method for attainment.' A Tantric meditation practice involving rituals, visualization, invocation and recitation of mantras.

Śamatha (Skt): Traditional form of meditation based on mindfulness of breathing. (Chök. *zhi gnas*)

Samaya (Skt): Sacred pledges, precepts or commitments of Vajrayana practice; the sacred bond between the vajra master and disciple that protects both the disciple and the integrity of the teachings

Tantra (Skt): Tantric practice is a highly advanced form of psycho-physical exercises employed in order to achieve transformation of one's body and mind quickly into the perfected state of a Buddha.

Tendö: Thread-cross: basic form consists of two thin wooden sticks bound together in the shape of a cross, more complex ones can be three dimensional; a complex arrangement of coloured threads is strung around the cross. Originating in the indigenous, pre-Buddhist Bön religion of Tibet, the *tendö*, traditionally woven as a trap for harmful spirits, has been incorporated into Buddhist tradition where a three-dimensional construction of thread-crosses serves as a Maṇḍala, or dwelling for a particular tantric deity during performance of a ritual.

Tertön: Treasure-revealer; discoverer of religious treasure (*terma*) hidden by Guru Rinpoche

Thangka: Religious picture, either painted or embroidered, in form of a scroll

Thukdam: Meditation before the *bardo* state - a stage of life after death where the body lies in meditative state without decomposing; can also mean the tutelary deity on whom a Master relies to achieve meditative success (Chök. *thugs dam*)

Torma: Figures made mostly of flour and butter, in various shapes and colours, used in tantric rituals or as offerings; each deity and ritual has its own special torma (Chök. gtor ma)

Trülku: Reincarnate *lama*, of a religious lineage

Tsechu: Religious festival held in honour of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava)

Tsipön / tsipa: Master of astrology / astrologer

Tsan-Spirit: Warlike, nonhuman spirit

Tsha tsha: Miniature *chörten* or *stūpa*

Tshokhor: Tantric ritual ceremonial communion feast (Skt. *Ganachakra*, Dz. *Tshok*). This is the generic term for a variety of Tantric assemblies, or feasts, in which practitioners meet to perform mantra, create and empower sacred objects, to worship, and to practice various Tantric rituals. These feasts are regarded as an indispensable means for conferring accomplishment and pacifying obstacles. The overall purpose is to distribute merit and wisdom in the context of a specific tantric ritual. The feast-offering has three aspects: the gathering of practitioners; the outer, inner and secret sacraments of the ritual which are offered and consumed during the feast; and the Buddhas – actual or visualized – who receive the offerings and bring the ritual to a successful conclusion.

Tummo: Psychic heat yoga; Chöked term for an advanced type of meditation, practice of which can cause an intense sensation of body heat to arise

Uchen: Block letter style of classical Chöked script (see also **Lantsā**, **Wartu**)

Umze: Precentor, chanting master

Utse: Central tower and tallest part of a dzong; usually three to four storeyed, it contains the central chapel of the complex (Dz. *dbu rtse*)

Upādhyāya: Spiritual guide or teacher

Vajra: Rtual tool or spiritual implement which symbolically destroys all kinds of ignorance and is itself indestructible (Chök. *rdo rje*). In tantric traditions, the vajra is a symbol for the nature of reality. **Vajra** is a Sanskrit word meaning both thunderbolt and diamond. The vajra is a small metal sceptre that has the nature of a diamond (it can cut any substance but not be cut itself) and the nature of the thunderbolt (irresistible force). Held in the right hand by lamas during religious ceremonies, the vajra represents firmness of spirit and spiritual power.

Vajrasamaya: Literally, the pledge of the thunderbolt (*vajra*) which is the pledge to carry out the action of the Buddha; tantric commitments

Vajrayana: The 'vajra vehicle'; the practices of taking the result as the path (Chök. *rdo rje theg pa*). The Vajrayāna path is considered to be a path within the Mahāyāna which employs special means or practices to "accelerate" the process of awakening. According to the traditions and lineages of Vajrayāna Buddhism, the Vajrayāna techniques provide an accelerated path to enlightenment. This is achieved through use of tantra techniques, which are practical aids to spiritual development, and esoteric transmission, meaning that the transmission of certain accelerating factors only occurs directly from teacher to student during an initiation.

The path has three stages. The first stage is the *guru*, which corresponds to the initial realization of the true nature of reality as this is introduced by the *guru* in the empowerment; the second stage is the *devata*, corresponding to Contemplation, the method used for developing the

state discovered in the initial realization of the true nature of reality; the third and final stage is the Ḍākinī insofar as the Ḍākinī is the source of the activities of realization. (see also **Ḍākinī, Tantra**)

Wartu: The *Wartu* script is an Indic script which is closely related to the Golmol script of Nepal. The letter shapes in the Wartu script are similar to those of the *Lantsā* and Ranjana script but written without a "head" or top stroke and more rounded. The *Wartu* script was once used to write Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts but it is most frequently found today on the title pages of Chöked texts, where a Sanskrit translation of the title is often written in Wartu. (see also **Lantsā, Uchen**)

Yangpön (contraction of *Yangpai Lopön*)**:** Head of the liturgical division, inclusive of Sacred Dances, Ritual Arts,a nd Metrical Rhyme of the monk body (Dz. *dbyangs pa'i slob dpon*)

Zhabdrung: Title given to the lineage of spiritual rulers of Bhutan

Zhengo: Hereditary title of families descended from famous religious figures; for a fuller explanation see above, under **Chöje**

Zhugdrel: Literally "seated in a row", a religious ceremony performed on all auspicious occasions

Zhung: Centre, or capital

Zung: Inner relics comprising written mantric formulas inscribed on tightly rolled sheets of paper, which are installed in images; there are different mantras for insertion in each part of the image



Bhutan can take pride in the numerous religious masters who have appeared throughout its recorded history. One such master is Jamgön Ngawang Gyaltshen (1647–1732), whose legacy has proved enduring in numerous fields relating to religious arts, crafts and ritual practices, and also institutionally through his family-based incarnation line and his monastery, the Chökhor Dorjeden (Seula) in Punakha district.

During his long life, Jamgön travelled widely within Bhutan and also further afield on lengthy diplomatic missions to Eastern Tibet (1688-1695) and to Ladakh (1706-1712), all in the service of his country. Jamgön lived through the turbulent era that marked Bhutan's faltering steps towards statehood, and the saga of his own life, encompassing changes of circumstance, adventures, and changes of fortune, can be read also as the saga of Bhutan.

Jamgön's life and times are vividly depicted in his biography, an elegantly written narrative by the accomplished biographer, Śākya Rinchen. The content of this English translation has been rearranged by the authors to better highlight the main events and postings of Jamgön's enthralling life.

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